The Story of the Catechism

TIL. GRABBNER

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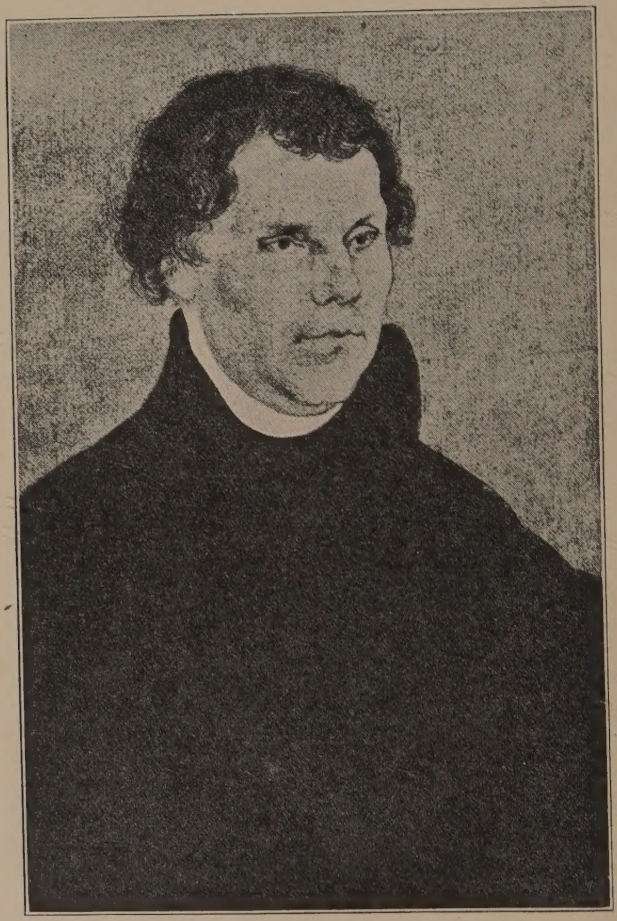

Dr. Martin Luther.

After a painting by Cranach.

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The Story of the Catechism

By

TH. GRAEBNER

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A PROLOG.

It was in the year 1529. Father Christopher of Hermannsburg, in the kingdom of Hanover, was seated at his desk, bent over the pages of his Missal. "The Fourth Sunday in Advent," he read, in a high monotone, as if chanting at the altar. "And this is the record of John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And John confessed and denied not, but confessed —"

A loud stamping at the door of the parsonage interrupted the priest in his preparations for the morrow's service. As he rose from his chair, the nightly visitor was rapping insistently at the door and called, "Father Christopher!"

"Yes, yes! Coming!" muttered the young priest, somewhat impatient with the eagerness of this demand for admission.

As he opened the door, a young man, dressed in the plain garb of a mechanic's apprentice, stepped in. The wintry blast filled the room with a small cloud of snowflakes during the moment of the visitor's entrance. He lost no time in explaining the nature of his call. He was benighted on his way to the city of Hanover, where he had been promised work in a carpenter's shop. Knowing by reputation the kindness and hospitality of Father

Christopher, he had made bold to come at this late hour, asking for a little food and for shelter during the night.

Young William Hauser — for thus he introduced himself — was not to be disappointed in his host. Whatever the parsonage was able to provide in the way of food and drink was at the visitor's disposal. The embers which had been dying on the hearth eagerly fed upon a new supply of fuel and filled the room with an agreeable warmth.

After William had partaken of his toothsome meal, he withdrew to a bench which stood opposite the fireplace, and observing that the priest was busy with a memorandum book at his desk, he settled down to the reading of a little book which he drew from a pocket of his waistcoat.

Having concluded his work, Father Christopher took up a little lamp from his desk and, approaching his visitor, was about to invite him to the spare bedroom, when he was struck speechless by the sight of the young carpenter who actually was reading a book, the pages of which were not covered with printed type, but, as a glance assured him, with written characters. (In that age an ordinary workingman who had mastered the art of reading and writing was about as rare as a man able to pilot an airplane in our own.)

"You are able to read?" he asked, his voice plainly registering the surprise at what he saw.

With a gentle smile, which, however, contained a note of pride, William admitted that he was an adept in this rare art.

"And what might you be reading if I may ask?" In place of an answer the young man passed the booklet to his host. Holding it under the flickering light of his candle and turning to the first pages, the priest read the words, inscribed with a broad goose-quill: —

DER KLEINE CATECHISMUS.

Drawing a stool up to the hearth and placing his candle upon another, the young priest began to read the book. Silently he turned page after page, and when he had finished reading a goodly portion of the manuscript, he drew a deep breath and asked his visitor: —

"What kind of book is this? Who has written it? Where did you get it?"

"Dr. Martinus of Wittenberg has written it, and I obtained it from a friend, to whom I am to return it. It was printed earlier in the year by Conrad Treffer at Erfurt. The book is so much sought after that the printers cannot supply enough copies, and my friend transcribed this with his own hand."

After a pause he added the question, "What do you think of it?"

The priest made no reply, but suggested that it

was time for the visitor to retire, and showed him to his bedroom. However, he asked permission to complete his reading of the book that very evening, which permission was cheerfully granted. . . .

After breakfast, on the following morning, Father Christopher said: —

"My good Hauser, I must tell you that this little catechism has strangely affected me. You must permit me to make a copy of it and therefore to accept my poor hospitality until I have completed the task of transcribing it. Much have I heard about this strange monk who has challenged emperor and Pope, and I considered him a rank heretic and a destroyer of the Lord's vineyard. But heretic or no heretic, blessed are the hands which have written this book, and blessed they who believe its teachings!"

Days lengthened into weeks, and William Hauser was still a guest of the good priest Christopher. One reason for this was the run-down condition of the young man's health, who had come afoot from distant Saxony during the bleak season of an early northern winter and was all but famished when he had reached the gate of the parsonage. While the priest tended to the physical needs of his guest and gradually helped him regain his strength, the young man performed a similar service, in a spiritual sense, upon the poor

withered and stunted soul of the clergyman. Many times a day he would speak in glowing terms of the powerful sermons of Luther, of the thousands who were coming to Wittenberg to hear that man of God; of the sensation caused by Luther's translation of the New Testament into German; of the hymns of the Reformation Church that could be heard, not only in schools and churches, but also in the homes, in the shops, and on the market-place.

"But does not this monk dread the wrath of his enemies? Is he not under the curse of the Pope and under the ban of the emperor? Does he dare to move about among people?"

"You may not believe it, but Brother Martinus associates with uttermost freedom with people of every station. His study is never without its visitors from at home and abroad, and his lecture-room is crowded with strangers from every land, even from England and Scotland, from Denmark and Bohemia."

"I suppose," remarked the priest after a moment's thought, "he depends upon the protection of the Elector of Saxony."

"He gratefully acknowledges the friendship of that ruler, but when he was about to return to Wittenberg during the days of the fanatics, who were setting things topsyturvy, and when the Elector warned him that at the Wartburg he was safe, while he could not guarantee him protection

at Wittenberg, what do you suppose Luther answered?"

With glistening eyes the young man then quoted the famous sentence from Luther's reply to the Elector: "I do not stand in any need of Your Grace's protection; I stand under a much higher Protector, who will preserve my cause since it is His cause. Much rather might I say that the Elector stands in need of my protection," etc.

Father Christopher experienced a strangely glowing sensation in the region of his heart as he listened to these recitals. He was like a man born in captivity and living in a dungeon, who was now led forth and for the first time inhaled the air of freedom. When he bade farewell to the young carpenter, it was with tears in his eyes and a grateful handshake and embrace.

And now Father Christopher began to study the catechism. Writing directly to the publisher, he also obtained a copy of the Larger Catechism, which so marvelously sets forth the fundamentals of Christian doctrine. Then he got the New Testament in Luther's translation and a number of sermons of the Reformer. It was not long before he became convinced that he had been an unfaithful shepherd of Christ's flock. He was at times ready to despair as he considered all that he had neglected to teach his people. But he found mercy in the redeeming blood of Christ, and his

heart was now at rest. And it came true in his case as in that of so many thousands of others — that which he now believed as the very truth of God he could not but impart to others. He began to preach in the language of the people, and he preached the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith. He invited young and old to receive instruction, and his text-book was Luther's Catechism.

But the enemy of truth was not willing to give up this stronghold. Fanatical mobs roamed through the countryside in order to prevent the Lutheran doctrine from gaining a hold on pastors and congregations. Also Christopher's services were rudely broken up. At the bishop's orders, soldiers were stationed at the church, who prevented the holding of services. His people gathered at the parsonage, but here also the meetings were quickly broken up; then at farmhouses — with the same result.

Finally one of the members of his parish suggested that they meet in the forest at dusk.

For a time these meetings remained unmolested, but prowling spies of the bishop in the end ferreted out the meeting-place, and on the following Sunday both pastor and congregation were placed under arrest. In the town of Celle they were kept in jail, and a determined effort was now made to break down the faith of these confessors. It was

in vain. How it might all have ended no one can tell. But the hour of freedom was already striking. Duke Ernst of Lueneburg, one of the noble confessors at Augsburg, returned from that famous diet (where the name Protestant was coined) and announced his decision that throughout the land religious freedom should prevail. With many other faithful preachers of the Gospel, Pastor Christopher also (once priest) returned to his station and for many years labored as an evangelical shepherd. The visit of the destitute young carpenter on the eve of the Fourth Sunday in Advent in 1529 had borne fruit a thousandfold.

CHAPTER I.

Darkness.

"No one knew what was the Gospel, what Christ, Baptism, Confession, Sacrament; what was faith, spirit, flesh; what were good works, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer; what was praying, what suffering, what comfort; what was government, matrimony, parents, children, lords, servants, lady, maid; what was devil, what angel, world, life, death, sin; what was righteousness, what forgiveness of sins, God, bishop, clergy, Church; what was a Christian and what the Christian cross. In a word, we knew nothing of what a Christian ought to know."

In these words, written in 1531, Luther reminded his people of the change that had come about through the publication of the Catechism. "The Catechism," he declared, "is a fine instruction of conscience, so that one may know how to lead a Christian life, how to know Christ," — and then he leads over to the passage quoted above.

The Catechism brought light. The age before the Catechism was an age of darkness. We call that time the Dark Ages. Not as if human achievement had come to a standstill. There was some splendid building and painting and carving, and there was an interest in literature, ancient as well as contemporary. But the masses of the people were ground between the upper and nether millstones of the nobility and of the clergy. Illiteracy like unto that of modern Mexico and Portugal covered most of Europe. The teachings of Christianity had become encrusted with a mass of legends and superstitions. Even the greater part of the aristocracy was ignorant of the art of writing, and the scholarship of the ordinary priest was a mockery upon the word education.

Luther's words, quoted at the head of this chapter, were not exaggeration. If anything, they described the conditions too moderately. Erasmus and his brother humanists and the authors of the *Letters of Obscure Men* paint the ignorance even of the upper classes in colors more sensational. The age which preceded the publication of Luther's Small Catechism was indeed an age of darkness.

This is not the same as saying that Christianity had vanished from the earth. Baptism was administered to every infant, and the sponsors were required to know the Creed and the Lord's Prayer

and had to pledge that they would teach these elements to the child when it grew up, in case the parents should die. Some of the better clerics would also instruct their people in the meaning of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and bishops not entirely consumed by worldly ambition or besotted with carnal lusts would instruct their parish priests to give some attention to these matters. There were resolutions of councils which made such instruction obligatory in the later Middle Ages. Besides the Creed and the Lord's Prayer also prayers before and after meals, the Hail Mary, and a few psalms were taught in the Latin schools. After the invention of the art of printing large placards, or posters, were printed on heavy cardboard, and thus the text of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Decalog became more familiar to the eyes of the growing child. Of course, the common man was unable to purchase these posters, but some of the bishops had them exhibited in the church vestibules, where the people would see them as they came to Mass.

Prayer-books and Communion-books were plentiful in the Middle Ages. But the tendency of these was simply to fasten the shackles of priest rule upon the people. As Luther says in the Smalcald Articles: "Here was neither faith nor Christ, and the communicant would not be directed to the strength of Absolution, but was rather

trained to count his sins and trust in the intensity of his repentance."

Painter, in reviewing the institutions operated for educational purposes in those centuries, says: "The ecclesiastical schools were designed chiefly for candidates for the priesthood; the parochial schools fitted the young for church-membership; the burgher schools were intended for the commercial and artisan classes of the cities; knightly education gave training to chivalry. Thus the laboring classes were left to toil on in ignorance and want; they remained in a dependent and servile condition, their lives unillumined by intellectual pleasures. If here and there, as claimed by Roman Catholic writers, popular schools were established, they were too few in number and too weak in influence to deserve more than a passing mention."

The priests in the cities were too indolent to teach the children, but would hire drill-masters, men, as a rule, who were incapable of gaining their livelihood in any other way, men without knowledge or educational training, and, therefore, incompetent to conduct a well-regulated school. They would make the children commit to memory the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and several hymns by constant repetition and rehearsing. The education of the youth in the country was wholly neglected; the children

The Schoolmaster.

From a tract illustrated by Albrecht Duerer.

were entirely ignorant of even the most necessary points of the Christian doctrines.

From the records of the Visitations of 1528 and 1529 we learn that there was an applicant for the ministry who did not even know the Ten Commandments and had not peeped into a book for six years. While it is true that by the Latin schools the texts of the catechism were made a part of their curriculum, this was not done in view of the religious instruction therewith connected, but for the purpose of having a bridge between the Latin school, in which the Latin tongue served as medium of instruction, and the German-speaking home. The achievements of these institutions, if there really were any, with few exceptions, did not range beyond the mechanical memorizing of the verbal text.

There existed, indeed, explanations of the Commandments, the Creed, etc.; however, much of the material provided was not for the purpose of religious instruction, but in order to render confessional examination easier, and, as Professor Reu points out, "in proportion as the material increased, an inner appropriation of it became impossible. The Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the catalog of mortal sins, and the Hail Mary were augmented by the addition of the seven charisms, the seven sacraments, the seven works of charity, the eight Beatitudes, the twelve fruits of the Spirit, the Ten

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Commandments of the Lord, the crying sins, the alien sins, the five senses, etc."

In the age immediately preceding the Reformation religious instruction, such as it was, had reached a point of lowest efficiency. Parents and sponsors were extremely indifferent and were incapable of attending to the work of instruction. Some well-meaning churchmen perceived this neglect of the church's youth and endeavored to raise the standards of instruction. Some of them, like Geiler and Johann Wolf in Germany, Gerson in France, Erasmus in the Netherlands, John Colet in England, tried to supply handbooks of instruction. But that which is specifically Christian, the fear and love of God and salvation by the merits of Jesus Christ, at best sounded as diminishing overtones through the lesson material provided by these intellectual leaders. The emphasis remained on works, and the very meaning of faith was as yet like a book sealed with seven seals.

Concerning the books of devotion in use (sparingly at that) in medieval times, Luther said (1522): —

"Among the many harmful publications by which the Christians were deluded and led into superstition, the worst were those handbooks of prayer, like *Little Garden of the Soul* and *Paradise of the Soul,* the passionals and books of legends, which belabor the Christian with enforced con-

fessions and counting of sins, and all kinds of unchristian freaks of prayer to God and the saints. These books really deserved a complete reformation — rather, annihilation." The editor of the Catechism volume in the Weimar Edition of Luther's works remarks: "Where these catalogs of sins were used for self-examination, they undoubtedly had to produce confusion and endless self-torment; if, indeed, they did not become degraded into simply mechanical means of recording one's moral condition. We can well understand the Reformer's protest against this futile cataloging of sins."

The adoration of saints never so closely approached idolatry as in these devotional handbooks. Especially Mary is called the Mediatrix between God and man; the Restorer of the lost grace of all men; the Illuminatrix, who dispels the ignorance which exposes to eternal death; the Advocate before the throne of God; the Mighty Queen of heaven; the Holy Empress of the angels. The mere recitation of many of these prayers was to guarantee escape from pestilence and sudden death. Many years of indulgence were granted those who would pronounce a certain prayer on a certain day. Others had the promise attached to them that whoever uttered a prayer could thereby release fifteen dead relatives from the pangs of purgatory, etc.

Undoubtedly a thorough reformation of Christian instruction was in order. What the Church needed, and needed very badly, was an agency that would make intelligent use of such schools as then existed and a text-book that would contain, not only the elements of Christianity which had survived, but a condensed statement of all that was necessary for a Christian to know, and a Biblical, evangelical explanation of these elements. This is what Luther gave the Church in his Catechisms.

CHAPTER II.

At Daybreak.

"Onward, in the name of God! What we need for our church services first of all is a plain, simple, and well-written catechism. Catechism is a term for that instruction which is necessary to teach the heathen who have now determined to be Christians in order to guide them in those things which Christianity demands of us in the way of faith and conduct. Hence catechumen was the term applied to the pupils who were under instruction in the elements of Christian doctrine before their admission to Baptism. . . . And now let no one think himself too smart and despise such childhood instruction. When Christ wanted to train men, He had to become man. If we are to train children, we must become like unto them."

Luther's convictions regarding the need of a reformation of Christian instruction had become a certainty when he penned these words in the opening paragraphs of his book on *The German*

Wo ein Husvader synem gesynde schal leren/ sick des Morgens vnde Auendes tho segende.

Des Morgens wenn du vth dem bedde springest/ so schaltu dy segenen mit dem Hilligen Crütze vnde seggen.

Des wolde Godt/ de Vader/ de Sönc/ vnde de Hillige geist/ Amen.

Darna knyende edder stande/ den Louen vnde dat Vader vnse spreken/ Wolty/ so machstu dyth bedeken dartho spreken.

Ick dancke dy myn hemmelsche Vader/ dorch Jhesum Christum dynen leuen Söne mynen Heren/ dat du my desse nacht auer vor allem schaden vnde vare behodt vnde bewaret heffst/ Vnde bidde dy/ Du willest my dessen dach auer ock bewaren/ vor sünden vnde allem öuel/ dat dy alle myn dönt vnde leuent behage/ Wente ick beuele/ my/ myn liff vnde seele/ vnde alle dinck/ ynn dyne hende/ Dyn hillige Engel sy mit my/ dat de böse viendt nene macht auer my vinde/ Amen.

Vnde denne mit frowden tho dynem arbeide geghan/ Vnde wör ein lede gesungen/ alse de Tein bade/ edder wat dyne andacht gifft.

Des Auendes wenn du tho bedde gheist/ so schaltu dy segenen mit dem Hilligen Crütze vnde seggen.

Des wolde Godt/ de Vader/ de Söne/ vnde de Hillige geist/ Amen.

Darna knyende edder stande/ den Louen vnde dat Vader vnse spreken/ Wo lyu/ so machstu dyth bedeken dartho spreken.

Ick dancke dy myn hemmelsche Vader/ dorch Jhesum Christum dynen leuen Söne mynen Heren/ dat du my dessen dach auergnedichliken behodt vnde bewaret heffst/ Vnde bidde dy/ Du willest my vorgeuen/ alle myne sünde/ wor ick vnrecht gedan hebbe/ vnde my desse nacht auer ock ghedichliken bewaren/ Wente ick beuele/ my/ myn liff vnde seele/ vnde alle dinck/ in dyne hende/ Dyn hillige Engel sy mit my/ dat de böse viendt nene macht auer my vinde/ Amen.

Vnde denne sucke vnde frölick geslapen.

Mart. Luther.

Gedruckt tho Wittenberch/ dorch Nickel Schirlentz.
M D XXIX.

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Catechism in Poster Form, Low German, 1529.

Only page extant. Contains the Morning and Evening Prayer. Size, one-fourth of the original.

Mass, a handbook for the conduct of religious services, to replace the Roman Mass. But this book was written in 1526, whereas, in order to find the roots of Luther's Catechisms, we must dig deeper into the great Reformer's career.

Following the example of the other preachers toward the end of the Middle Ages who had used the Ten Commandments for sermonic material, Luther, in the pulpit of the Wittenberg pastor Simon Heinz, began to preach sermons on the Ten Commandments as early as the summer of 1516. Having finished these in February, 1517, he explained in the subsequent Passion season the Lord's Prayer from the pulpit. In the same year, for the purpose of teaching preparation for confession and self-examination, as required by St. Paul, he wrote a very brief exposition of the Ten Commandments. This little book was republished in 1518, and another exposition of the Ten Commandments, entitled *Brief Explanation,* was likewise published in both German and Latin. This was followed by a new *Exposition of the Lord's Prayer,* and in the same year, 1519, there followed *A Short Form to Understand and Pray the Lord's Prayer.* While his exposition of the Decalog already had received the high praise of being the instrument in his hand for drawing the veil from Moses' countenance, his exposition of the Lord's Prayer was commended even more highly. Beatus Rhenanus, the Hu-

manist, wrote to Zwingli that this treatise should be spread through all Switzerland, in all cities and hamlets and villages thereof, yea, in every house. And the literary censor of Venice said concerning Luther's exposition: "Blessed are the hands which wrote this; blessed the eyes that shall see it; blessed the hearts that believe the book and cry to God accordingly!" This little book was frequently reprinted and appeared a year later in Latin and Bohemian versions and as late as 1844 was translated into English.

In March, 1519, Luther wrote to Spalatin: "I am prevented by much work from translating my *Exposition of the Lord's Prayer* into Latin. I am teaching every night the Commandments and Lord's Prayer to children and illiterates; then I preach, etc." Evidently, while Luther was preaching the Catechism material, he was trying to get it into shape for the printer. His book (1519) *Short Instruction How to Make Confession* was really an explanation of the Ten Commandments, a book which he republished under another title the following year. Another little booklet explained the Lord's Prayer in the form of prayers. This and another interpretation of the Lord's Prayer appeared in the same year (1519). Accordingly, we see Luther intensely busy with labors that were to have the Small Catechism as their immortal fruit.

Title-Page of First Edition of Luther's Large Catechism.
Wittenberg, 1529.

An important landmark in Luther's catechetical labors was a little treatise published in 1520, intended for the common people, whom it was to serve as a Christian preparation for Communion. It bore the title: *A Short Form of the Ten Commandments; a Short Form of the Creed; a Short Form of the Lord's Prayer.* The exposition of the Creed, now for the first time accorded literary treatment by Luther, is "a rare classical model of impressive language and evangelical grasp." Especially noteworthy in this connection is the statement: "Not without divine ordering has the arrangement been made that the ordinary Christian, unable to read the Scriptures, should be taught to know the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer — the three parts in which all the essentials of Christian knowledge are comprehended." Thus with one stroke of the pen Luther discarded all the rank underbrush of medieval idolatry and superstition which had so long impeded the access to sound Christian instruction. For the first time, too, the Creed is divided into three articles instead of the twelve which it had received in Roman tradition. That Luther was prompted to this division by having in mind the saving acts of the three persons of the divine Trinity is stated by himself. He points out the interior connection between the various parts of the Catechism as follows: —

"From the Commandments a person learns to know his disease and perceives what he can and cannot do. In the Creed he is taught where to find the remedy, grace, by which he will be enabled to obey the Commandments, by being shown the offer of divine mercy in Christ. The Lord's Prayer teaches us how to desire and obtain these gifts, namely, through the proper, humble kind of prayer. Thus he shall be saved by a life in accordance with the divine will."

As an illustration of the method used by Luther in this *Short Form* his explanation of the First Article is here presented in Professor Reu's translation (the reader will not fail to note already in this exposition the occurrence of certain phrases which have become familiar to Lutherans the world over through the explanation of the First Article in the Small Catechism): —

"I renounce the evil spirit, likewise all idolatry, all sorcery, and false belief. I put my trust in no man on earth nor in myself, my strength, skill, property, piety, or anything I may possess. I put my trust in no creature in heaven or on earth. I will put it altogether in the only, invisible, incomprehensible God, who has created heaven and earth; who alone, of all beings, is above every creature. On the other hand, I have no dread of all the malice of the devil and his ilk; for my God

is above them all. When men forsake and persecute me, I will trust in God nevertheless. I will still believe, though I be poor, dull, un-

Illustration from Third Wittenberg Edition, 1529.

Picture of Christ and the Syrophenician woman, illustrating the Seventh Petition. (The original was in colors and slightly larger.)

learned, despised, or penniless. Sinner that I am, I will trust nevertheless; for this my faith shall and must soar above all things — above things that abide and things that fail, above sin and above virtue, so that, true and pure, it may rest in God.

as the First Commandment requires. I desire no sign from heaven to test God. Constant my trust shall be, no matter how long He delay; I will fix for Him no limit; I will assign to Him no season nor bind Him to measure or method: but in faith, free and true, I will commit everything to His divine will. The Almighty, what gift, what helpful deed, should He withhold from me? Since He is the Creator of earth and heaven, who should rob or injure me? Yea, how could anything fail to bless and serve me as long as He is favorable to me who is obeyed and served by all? Being God, His knowledge and power are equal to my need. Being Father, He will gladly supply my need. Inasmuch as I do not doubt this and trust Him even as I have said, I am surely His child, servant, and heir; and as I trust, so shall it be."

In the *Short Form* of 1520 Luther had collected the results of his previous catechetical labors. Until the Small Catechism appeared, this *Short Form* was the chief handbook of religious instruction wherever the Gospel was restored in the lands of Europe. Translated into English as part of the *Booklet of Prayers* of 1522, it formed the first evangelical catechism of England (Marshall's *Primer*).

But Luther continued to work and rework the Catechism material. He continued to preach on the (three) Chief Parts and urged upon all true

pastors to do the same. He went over the same ground again and again. Series upon series of sermons did he preach. The year 1523, with a number of catechetical sermons by Luther, witnesses the publication of the so-called *Five Questions in Regard to the Holy Supper*. The latter were taken from a sermon of Luther's on the Sacrament and published as an aid to preparation for communicants, in view of the practise prevalent since 1523 to ask questions in regard to the reasons for communing. (Notice that the Sacraments are now coming in for independent treatment.) It is likewise due to Luther's efforts that Wittenberg, in 1521, received a regular catechist for its youth in the person of Agricola.

More and more, as his observation widened and his experience ripened, the Wittenberg Reformer was impressed with the need of a book which should briefly set forth the Chief Parts particularly for the instruction of the young and the illiterate. The *Booklet of Prayers*, though used occasionally for this purpose and recommended by Luther himself as late as 1526, had not been written specifically with this end in view. In his letters he continues to refer to the same subject. Despairing, finally, of getting his hands free for this work, he commissioned Justus Jonas and Agricola in February, 1525, with the preparation of a *catechismus puerorum* (catechism for children),

and this was the first time that the word catechism, which up to this time had always denoted oral instruction, was applied to a book. When this project came to naught, Luther decided to write a catechism himself. Before he was able to carry out this plan, however, the *Booklet for Laymen and Children* appeared (1525). Possibly Bugenhagen was the author, yet the text closely follows the thoughts of Luther's earlier works and in part contains his explanations. Here for the first time Baptism and the Lord's Supper appear as "chief parts," and several prayers are added, which later found their way into the Small Catechism.

In his *German Mass* (1526) Luther next gave directions how to use the catechism material which he and his assistants had published. He wanted the Chief Parts to be made part of the regular Sunday worship and recommended that they be recited by the children or read to them every day. He strongly recommended week-day services with a catechetical sermon. At the same time he makes the demand upon parents to teach their children Bible-passages and to unfold to the little ones their meaning.

Later, when he wrote his *Introduction to the Large Catechism,* Luther said: "This *sermon* is to inaugurate a course of instruction for children and illiterates." The word *sermon* points to the more immediate source out of which both the Large and

Title-Page of the Edition of 1536.
Sixth Wittenberg edition.

Frontispiece to the Ten Commandments.
Sixth Wittenberg edition, 1536.

the Small Catechisms grew. It was the Reformer's practise to preach an annual sermon on the Sacrament of the Altar, later also on Baptism, meanwhile continuing to preach series of sermons on the Ten Commandments and the Creed. The three series which he preached during the year 1528 are especially noteworthy in this connection. Between May 18 and 30 he preached the first series, treating the five Chief Parts. September 14 to 25 he preached the second series, and November 30 to December 19, the third. A copy of these sermons is still in existence in the form of notes taken by Luther's friend Roerer. Unquestionably, we have here the final stage of preparation before the Catechism was written. The German scholar Buchwald, who first investigated these sermons when Roerer's manuscripts were found in the university library at Jena, says: "Luther's Catechism sermons of 1528 are the Reformer's preparatory work for his two catechisms and more immediately, for the Small Catechism, which, accordingly, was written before the Large. The very text of the Small Catechism is here seen in course of development."

The text of these sermons is a strange mixture of German and Latin. This, however, was customary not only in theological lectures, but also in sermons.

As for the form which the Small Catechism finally assumed, it is possible that Luther was

guided by a catechism of the Bohemian Brethren which had been published in 1520. Luther refers to this catechism in 1523, finding fault, however, with its doctrine regarding the Lord's Supper. It is possible that the idea of a very brief form of instruction by means of questions and answers first occurred to Luther when he saw this Bohemian manual of doctrine. But the indebtedness of Luther to the Bohemian catechism, at most, goes no farther than this. The thoughts and, in great part, the very phraseology of both the Small and the Large Catechism can be traced in the sermons which Luther delivered in 1528.

Especially in the third cycle of sermons, preached in December, occur many expressions which show the origin of our familiar catechism text. In order to make this plain to our readers, we would, of course, have to print in parallel columns the German or Latin phraseology of these sermons and, alongside, the text of the Small Catechism as finally developed. However, the scholar who wishes to make this comparison will find the text of these sermons in the Weimar Edition, Vol. 30, Sec. I, pp. 57—122, and a comparison of significant phrases pp. 550—556. For the purpose of this booklet it will suffice to give a few examples in English translation which will plainly show the dependence of the Small Catechism on this third cycle of sermons.

The Ten Commandments.

The First Commandment.

"To have God is to fear Him and trust in Him."

The Second Commandment.

"Thou shalt not by His name swear, curse, use witchcraft, blaspheme, lie, deceive, teach falsely, but rather fear God, call upon Him in every need, love and honor Him."

The Third Commandment.

"Beware lest thou despise preaching and the Word of God, but with all sincerity and humility learn it."

The Fourth Commandment.

"Thou shalt not despise nor blaspheme nor speak evil of thy parents, but show them every honor, serve and obey and esteem them highly in thy heart."

The Fifth Commandment.

"Thou shalt not hurt nor harm thy neighbor, but help and advance him."

The Sixth Commandment.

"Thou shalt be chaste in words and deeds, love thy wife and honor her."

The Seventh Commandment.

"Thou shalt do no harm to thy neighbor's property, but shalt help and be of assistance to him whenever possible."

The Eighth Commandment.

"Speak well of thy neighbor; and if others attack his honor, do all thou canst to cover up his faults."

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments.

"It is easily possible to deprive a man of his property with a show of right. . . . No one shall estrange the other man's wife or servants or horse by unjust dealing, but be of assistance to him that he keep them."

The Conclusion.

"God is a jealous God who will visit the sins unto the third and fourth generations. But He also says: 'I will have mercy on many thousands that love Me.' "

The Creed.

The First Article.

"This is to say that I believe I am God's creature; that He has given me body, soul, eyes, reason, property, wife, children, fields, hogs, and cattle. . . . And thou owest Him for these gifts to serve Him, praise, and give thanks."

NEc desiderabis du solt auch nicht begehren/ uxorem ejus sein Weib/ non servum nicht den Knecht/ nön ancillam nicht die Magd/ non bovem nicht den Ochsen/ non asinum nicht den Esel/ nec omnia noch alle Dinge/ qvæ sunt illius *scil. proximi* die da seyn/ des Nechsten sind.

Quid was/ *hoc* dieses/ *vult* will/ *sibi* ihm?

Responsio Antwort.

Debemus wir sollen/ timere fürchten/ & diligere und lieben/ Deum GOtt/ ne abalienemus daß wir nicht abspannen/ oder abweudig machen/ aut abstrahamus oder abziehen/ à proximo von dem Nechsten/ uxorem sein Weib/ servos die Knechte/ ancillas die Mägde/ vel pecudes suas oder sein Viehe/ sed oportet sondern man muß/ adhortari illos dieselben vermahnen/ oder anhalten/ ut maneant daß sie bleiben/ & faciant diligenter und mit Fleiß thun/ officium suum ihr Ammt.

Explicatio Vocabulorum.

Decimus, a, um, der zehende/ die zehende/ das zehende.

Nec und nicht/ oder noch/ *Conjunctio Copulativa.*

1. Desidero ich begehre/ *desideravi, desideratum.*

Desideror ich werde begehret/ *desideratus sum.*

Uxor Eheweib/ *Nomen subst. 3. decl.*

Is, derselbe/ ea, dieselbe/ id, dasselbe/ *pron. Relat.*

Non nicht/ *Adverbium negandi.*

Servus der Knecht/ *Nomen substantivum.*

Ancilla die Magd/ *Nomen subst.*

Bos

Page from German-Latin Catechism by Johann Rhein.

Printed at Leipsic in the seventeenth century.

The Second Article.

"He has delivered me from death, sins, hell, and every evil. He has purchased me, so that I come under His dominion, become a child of God, and be led into holiness of life. This He did not by means of gold, silver, military power, but by Himself, His own body."

The Third Article.

"The Holy Spirit sanctifies by leading me into the holy Christian Church by the preaching of the Gospel. . . . When I have died, He will complete this sanctification through the resurrection and the everlasting life."

The Lord's Prayer.

The First Petition.

"What is it to hallow the name of God? This, that our doctrine and life be Christian and divine. The name is in itself holy, but we pray that it may be hallowed in ourselves and in all the world and that the Word and honor of God be upheld against all *Schwaermer* and blasphemers of His name."

The Second Petition.

"God's kingdom comes whether we pray or not. But we are to pray that His kingdom might come to us and His will be done in us. This coming of the kingdom is twofold: here, through the Word; there, in eternity."

The Third Petition.

"God's will is done by itself, but we pray against Satan, the world, and our flesh, who do not want to have the name of God sanctified nor His kingdom come."

The Fourth Petition.

"God gives His bread abundantly also to the wicked. But we Christians are to know it and recognize that it comes from God. Everything that belongs to the support of our life is called for in this petition."

The Fifth Petition.

"Every day we sin by words, deeds, and thoughts; every day we must pray for the remission of sins."

The Sixth Petition.

"Preserve us, dear Lord, against the assaults of the devil! Such temptation is: to be affected with unbelief and doubts. You have the promise that God will deliver you from the temptation of the flesh, the world, and Satan."

The Seventh Petition.

"Evil here refers to anything that harms us, such as sickness, poverty, death."

Amen.

"It is the will of God that we pray and are certain that He will hear us."

Baptism.

"Baptism is water comprehended in, and sanctified with, the command of God. . . . For this reason it is a holy, living, heavenly, blessed water — on account of the Word and command of God. . . . What is the fruit and profit of it? It saves those who believe, as the words read, namely, that they are redeemed from sin, death, and the devil."

The Lord's Supper.

"The Sacrament is the body and blood of our Lord under the bread and wine. . . . What is the profit and use of the Sacrament? Listen: 'Given for thee,' 'shed for thee for the forgiveness of sins.' . . . Wouldst have forgiveness of sins, eternal life, then approach. . . . These words must be accepted in faith. He is worthy of the Sacrament who believes that this body and blood were offered for him."

The reader will understand that in the above we have only a few extracts from an entire cycle of sermons based on the Five Chief Parts. A closer study of these sermons in their entirety would even more convincingly show that the Catechism grew out of these discourses. But also the sermons preached earlier in the same year, the First and Second Cycles, were drawn upon for some of the wording of the Catechism. For instance, the First Cycle contains the word "love" in explaining the

First Commandment, while the Third Cycle said only "fear and trust." The First Cycle also has the familiar words in connection with the Lord's Supper: "Thus write Matthew, Mark, Luke, and St. Paul."

Undoubtedly, when writing his Catechisms, Luther had before him on his desk the transcript of his sermons as they had been taken down by his pupil Roerer. He culled here and there, choosing the best phrases, eliminating all references to his enemies (these references being plentiful in the Three Cycles of 1528), and thus, in the winter of 1528 to 1529, wrote both the Large and the Small Catechism. But this was not simply a literary effort, growing out of Luther's pulpit activity. There was a very specific motive which finally led to the writing of the Catechisms. Luther had conducted a visitation of the Saxon churches during the same winter, the famous Visitation referred to in the introduction to his Small Catechism. Of this, more in our next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

The Year of Grace 1529.

Ten years had passed since the beginning of the Reformation. In this momentous decade Luther had broken the hold of the Papacy upon the Church. He had given to his own people a translation of the New Testament into German, had published many sermons, as well as the first Protestant hymnal. Through an extended correspondence his influence had penetrated to all parts of Germany and beyond. With the assistance of such able men as Melanchthon, Bugenhagen, Jonas, and other energetic pioneers of the Reformation movement, Luther's efforts had worked a mighty change in the religious life of his age. One thing only was lacking in order to secure for the nations of Western Europe the full benefits of the revival of the Gospel. That one thing was a well-instructed ministry. There was a sad lack of clergymen who could be placed in charge of the congregations which had accepted the

teaching of Luther. He clearly perceived that the first requisite was men who could preach the Gospel from the pulpits and teach it to the youth of Germany in the newly founded schools.

In order to ascertain the actual state of affairs in congregations which were now nominally Lutheran, systematic visitations were imperative and a beginning of these was made in Saxony in the fall of 1528. Melanchthon set up a kind of questionnaire which was to be submitted to the pastors serving these congregations. During the winter that followed Luther himself traveled about, visiting churches and schools, particularly in Thuringia. The conditions which were revealed by these visitations were truly deplorable. Luther gave vent in the opening words of his introduction to the Small Catechism to the feelings of mingled wrath and dismay which filled his heart when he returned to his Wittenberg study. The words are well known, but are worthy of being called to mind in this connection: —

"The deplorable, miserable condition which I discovered lately when I, too, was a visitor, has forced and urged me to prepare [publish] this Catechism, or Christian doctrine, in this small, plain, simple form. Mercy! Good God! what manifold misery I beheld! The common people, especially in the villages, have no knowledge whatever of Christian doctrine, and, alas! many pastors

are altogether incapable and incompetent to teach (so much so, that one is ashamed to speak of it). Nevertheless, all maintain that they are Christians, have been baptized and receive the holy Sacraments. Yet they do not understand and cannot even recite either the Lord's Prayer or the Creed or the Ten Commandments; they live like dumb brutes and irrational hogs; and yet, now that the Gospel has come, they have nicely learned to abuse all liberty like experts.

"O ye bishops [to whom this charge has been committed by God], what will ye ever answer to Christ for having so shamefully neglected the people and never for a moment discharged your office? You are the persons to whom alone this ruin of the Christian religion is due. You have permitted men to err so shamefully; yours is the guilt, for you have ever done anything rather than what your office required you to do. May all misfortune flee you! [I do not wish at this place to invoke evil on your heads.] You command the Sacrament in one form [and is not this the highest ungodliness, coupled with the greatest impudence, that you are insisting on the administration of the Sacrament in one form only and on your traditions?] and insist on your human laws, and yet at the same time you do not care in the least [while you are utterly without scruple and concern] whether the people know the Lord's

die solche Gebot halten. Darumb sollen wir jn auch lieben vnd vertrawen / vnd gerne thun nach seinen Geboten.

qui mandata observant. Meritò igitur debemus nos Deum diligere & illi confidere, & juxta mandata ejus omnem nostram vitam sedulò ac diligenter instituere.

Der Glaube / wie ein Hausvater denselbigen seinem Gesinde / auffs einfeltigst fürhalten sol.

QVO PACTO PAEDAgogi suos pueros, Symbolum Apostolicum, simplicissimè docere debeant.

Der Erste Artickel / von der Schöpffung

ARTICULUS primus de Creatione.

ICH gleube an Gott den Vater / Allmechtigen Schöpffer Himels vnd der Erden.

CRedo in Deum Patrem, omnipotentē, creatorem cœli & terræ.

Was

Quid

μένῃσι, τὴν αὐτὴ χάριν Ϛ πάντα ἀγαθά. Πάντης ἂν τὸ θεὸν δι' ἀγάπης εἰς τὰ μάλιστα ἐθέλῃ πᾶσιν ἔχειν Ϛ ἄχρι ἐφίλουμι, ἢ πάντα τὰ ἐν ταύτῃς ταῖς ἐπαλαῖς ἐπαζαλλόμενα ἀμοιβῆς, Ϛ ὅλον τὸν ἡμῶν βίον ἢ ζωὴν πρὸς ἀγαπᾶν καὶ πρὸθῦμος ἁπλᾶν.

אתה
אלל
אהב
בטח
עשה
צוה

הַשֹּׁמְרִים אֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו וְאֶת־עֵדֹתָיו וְאֶת־חֻקָּיו וְאֶת־מִשְׁפָּטָיו אֲשֶׁר יִצְוֶה אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְהוֹדִיעַ לִבְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּן דּוֹר אַחֲרוֹן בָּנִים יִוָּלֵדוּ יָקוּמוּ וִיסַפְּרוּ לִבְנֵיהֶם וְיָשִׂימוּ בֵאלֹהִים כִּסְלָם וְלֹא יִשְׁכְּחוּ מַעַלְלֵי אֵל וּמִצְוֹתָיו יִנְצֹרוּ׃

KATA ΤΟΝ ΤΡΟΠΟΝ

οἱ παιδαγωγοὶ τοῦ αὐτῶν παῖδας, τὸ σύμβολον τὸ ἀποστολικὸν ἀπλᾶσαι διδάξω ὀφείλειν.

אמונת

עיר
חנך
נער
פה

הַצְּרִיכִים בַּאֲשֶׁר יחַנֵּךְ אִישׁ אֶת־נַעֲרוֹ עַל־פִּי דְרָכָיו׃

ΜΕΡΟΣ ΠΡΩΤΟΝ

περὶ τῆς τῶν πάντων ποιήσεως.

עִקַּר הָרִאשׁוֹן עַל־בְּרִיאָה׃

Πιστεύω εἰς θεὸν πατέρα, παντοκράτορα, ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ Ϛ γῆς.

אמן
אבה
שרד
רצה

מַאֲמִין אֲנִי בֵּאלֹהִים הָאָב שַׁדַּי בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ׃

Quadrilingual Catechism
(German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew).

Edited by John C. Hertzberger
and printed at Wittenberg in 1599.

[43]

Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, or any part of the Word of God. Woe, woe, unto you forever!"

Similarly, in his introduction to the Large Catechism: —

"For I well remember the time — indeed, even now it is a daily occurrence — that one finds rude, old persons who knew nothing, and still know nothing, of these things, and who, nevertheless, go to Baptism and to the Lord's Supper and use everything belonging to Christians, notwithstanding that those who come to the Lord's Supper ought to know more and have a fuller understanding of all Christian doctrine than children and new scholars."

Thus the Small Catechism sprang, as it were, directly from the compassion Luther felt for the churches on account of the sad state of destitution to which they had been brought, and which he felt so keenly during the visitation.

It is true that the thought of such a catechism did not first occur to him at this time. He had mentioned as early as 1525, in a letter to a friend, Nicolaus Hausmann, the plan of publishing such a book. He informs him: "Jonas and Agricola have been instructed to prepare a catechism for children. I am devoting myself to the postil [last part of the Winter Postil] and to Deuteronomy, where I have sufficient work for the present." In

a letter of March 25, 1525, also to Hausmann, Luther repeats: "The Catechism, as I have written before, has been given to its authors." However, when Jonas and Agricola [who soon moved from Wittenberg to Eisleben] failed, Luther resolved to undertake the work himself, which, according to his letter of February 2, he had declined merely for the reason that he was already sufficiently burdened. The execution of his plan, however, was deferred. September 27, 1525, he wrote to Hausmann: "I am postponing the Catechism, as I would like to finish everything at one time in one work." The same letter shows what Luther meant. For here he speaks of the reformation of the parishes and of the introduction of uniform ceremonies. Evidently, then, he at that time desired to publish the Catechism together with a visitation tract, such as Melanchthon wrote in 1527. The deplorable conditions which the Saxon visitation brought to light now permitted him to postpone the writing of the Catechism no longer. In our last chapter we surveyed the preparation stage in the form of catechetical tracts and sermons. Now the harvest was at hand.

In January, 1529, Luther wrote to Martin Goerlitz: "I am busy preparing the Catechism for the ignorant heathen." As a matter of fact, Luther was at this time engaged on both Catechisms, the Large as well as the Small; for on January 20,

1529, Roerer, the Wittenberg proof-reader, wrote to Roth: "Nothing new has appeared. I believe that the Catechism as preached by Dr. M. for the unlettered and simple will be published for the coming Frankfurt Mass. Yet, while writing this, I glance at the wall of my dwelling, and, fixed to the wall, I behold tables embracing in shortest and simplest form Luther's Catechism for children and the household, and forthwith I send them to you as a sample, so that by the same messenger they may be brought to you immediately." A few days later he announced that the tables which originally had been sold for from two to three pennies could not be purchased now for even a gold guilder, the whole edition being exhausted. Luther, accordingly, conforming to a practise not rare in the later Middle Age and already observed by himself on previous occasions, first published the book later popularly called "The Small Catechism" not in book form, but in that of posters or placards, so that, fixed upon the wall in the home and the school, they might be seen and read by all at all times.

Probably about the same time were published the two tables containing the morning and the evening prayers, a copy of one of which only has been passed down to us, namely, one printed in 1529 in Low-German, with Wittenberg as place of publication.

Dr. O. Albrecht, famous for his research into the history of the Catechism, says regarding Roerer's letter of January 20: "For the moment Roerer had not remembered the very interesting novelty which had already appeared in the first tables of the later so-called Small Catechism. However, a glance at the wall of his room reminded him of it. And from a letter of his, dated March 16, we must infer that they were the three charts containing the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer with Luther's explanation. These he calls 'tables which in shortest and simplest form embrace Luther's Small Catechism for the children and the household.' Thus he wrote in view of the superscription: 'As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household.' . . . He thought that this sample would indicate what was to be expected from the forthcoming larger work."

A close comparison of the dates of the earliest references to the Small Catechism reveals the fact that the manuscript for these tables, or posters, must have been sent to the printer about Christmas, 1528. At a visitation in the district of Schweinitz in which Luther took part he himself distributed the first series of tables, comprising the first three Chief Parts.

It was almost two months after the first table series had appeared before the second was pub-

lished. This delay is accounted for by Luther's illness and his being burdened with other work. In March he wrote to Hausmann: "The Catechism is not completed, my dear Hausmann, but it will be completed shortly." It should be noted that both the small and the large work are often referred to by Luther simply as "the Catechism." He was undoubtedly at this time working on the completion of the Small as well as on the text of the Large Catechism. In the poster edition the Five Chief Parts, Decalog, Creed, Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and Lord's Supper, were completed by March 16, 1529. The exact time when Luther composed the Table of Duties is not known. And the first evidence we have of the Small Catechism's appearing in book form is Roerer's letter of May 16, 1529, saying that he was sending two copies of the Small Catechism, the price of which, together with other books, was two groschen. The necessary data are lacking to determine how long Luther's manuscript was ready before it was printed and before the printed copies were distributed.

As to the Large Catechism, it was not completed when the second table series appeared in March. In a letter, the date of which must probably be fixed about the end of March, Roerer says: "The [book against the] Turk is not yet entirely struck off, neither the Catechism."

April 23, however, the Large Catechism was on the market, for on this day Roerer wrote: "I am sending three copies of the Catechism." It was the Large Catechism, for the price of each copy was two groschen, whereas on May 16, 1529, Roerer had sent two copies of the Small Catechism and other books for two groschen. The Large Catechism probably had appeared several weeks before April 23.

Undoubtedly Luther had worked on both the Small and the Large Catechism throughout the winter of 1528—1529. Neither of the books was sent to the printer as a complete manuscript, for it can be shown that certain parts of the Large Catechism were in print even before the charts were published January 9. It has also been pointed out that, in the explanation of the First Commandment, the wording of the conclusion of the Ten Commandments shows a number of variations from its wording in the Small Catechism, whereas its wording at the close of the explanation of the commandments is in conformity with it. This shows the correctness of the view that the Catechisms were written, as it were, side by side, Luther one day sending a sheaf of manuscript of the Large Catechism to the printer and on the next completing the text of the Small as it appeared on the charts.

Deutsch Katechismus, "German Catechism,"

was the title under which the Large Catechism first appeared and which Luther never changed. In the preface to the Small Catechism he used the expression "Large Catechism," having in mind his own Catechism, though not exclusively, as the context shows. Yet this was the natural title, since the shorter Catechism was from the beginning known as the "Small Catechism." And before long it was universally in vogue. The title of the Low-German edition of 1541 runs: *De Grote Katechismus Duedesch.* The Latin translation by Obsopoeus of 1544 is entitled *Catechismus Maior.* The index of the Wittenberg complete edition of Luther's Works of 1553 has *Der grosse Katechismus,* while the Catechism itself still bears the original title, *Deutscher Katechismus.* "German Catechism," corresponding to the title "German Mass," means German preaching for children, German instruction in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Luther wrote "German Mass" in order to distinguish it from the Latin, which was retained for many years at Wittenberg beside the German service. The *Wittenberg Liturgy* provided: "Before the early sermon on Sundays or on festival days the boys in the choir, on both sides, shall read the entire Catechism in Latin, verse by verse, without ornamental tone (*sine tono distincto*)." Accordingly, when Luther began to preach on the chief parts in German, he was said to conduct

"German Catechism." And since German services with German instruction were instituted by Luther in the interest of the unlearned and such as were unable to attend the Latin schools, the term "German Catechism" was equivalent to popular instruction in religion.

It cannot be proved that the opening word on the title-page of this first book edition was "Enchiridion," since this edition has disappeared without a trace, and the only remaining direct reprint does not contain the word "Enchiridion." All subsequent editions, however, have it.

The word "Enchiridion" is already found in the writings of Augustine, and later became common. It denotes a book of pithy brevity, an elementary book.

No copies of the original Wittenberg edition have been preserved, but its contents have been transmitted to us in the form of one Marburg and two Erfurt reprints. To relate in detail the story of the various editions of the two Catechisms would hardly serve the purpose of the present volume. Those who wish to enter more deeply into the subject should study the article by Dr. Bente in his introduction to the *Concordia Triglotta* and the chapter of Dr. Reu in his *Catechetics*. The complete text of the Small Catechisms of 1529 and 1531, together with a complete bibliography on the translations of the Small Catechism pre-

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pared during the Reformation age, is found in the Weimar Edition of Luther's Works (1910), Part I.

With reference to the pictures with which the Small Catechism was embellished when it first appeared, a few words are in place. The very first edition probably contained no illustrations. None of the charts have been preserved, except a translation of the morning and evening prayers into Low German. Aside from the ornamental margin this chart contains no adornment in the way of pictures. The illustrations contained in the first edition of the Large Catechism were not originally made for this book, but for a collection of sermons on the Catechism by Melanchthon, who probably selected the Bible stories which are shown in the pictures.* They likewise appeared in the Low German translation of 1529.

Regarding this use of illustrations, Dr. Reu remarks: "From the standpoint of method it is noteworthy that Luther added pictures to his Catechism, taken mostly from Scripture. Thereby he signified that he took his stand upon the principle of perception, so important from the viewpoint of method, an inference justified by the express advice given in his preface to adduce as many examples from Scripture as possible."

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* These are the small cuts inserted in the chapters of our book.

D. Martina Luthera
Katechiſmus

Czeſký a Německý

To geſt

Krátké obſaženj Artikulůw
Wjry a Nabožeństwj Křeſtánſkéhо

Kněmuž

Přidané gſau Otázky k [illegible] Mládeže
a Lidu ſproſtnéhо potřebné

Kterýž

Ke Cti a Chwále Božj, a wzdělanj
známoſti Prawdy Ewangeliſké

wydán

Nakladem Czeſké Cyrkwe.

---

w Drážďanech

Wytiſkl H. W. Harpeter. 1782.

Polish-German Catechism.
Printed at Dresden in 1782.

Our chapter would be incomplete without a reference to the Latin translations which appeared in the year 1529. There appeared in August of that year a *Prayer Booklet,* which contained the substance of the Small Catechism, but discarded the form of questions and answers. The second Latin translation of 1529 was furnished by Johannes Sauermann, of Bamberg, who matriculated at Wittenberg in the winter semester of 1518. Sauermann's translation was intended as a school edition of the Small Catechism. In the preface, dated September 18, 1529, "Johannes Sauromannus" writes: "Every one is of the opinion that it is clearly the best thing from early youth carefully and diligently to instruct the boys in the principles of Christian piety. And since I believe that of all the elementary books of the theologians of this age none are better adapted for this purpose than those of Dr. Martin Luther, I have rendered into Latin the booklet of this man which is called the Small Catechism, hoping that it may be given to the boys to be learned as soon as they enter the Latin school." At the same time Sauermann declares that this translation was published "by the advice and order of the author [Luther] himself."

CHAPTER IV.

The Six Chief Parts and Their Arrangement.

The three Chief Parts which existed as relics of a better age in Luther's time were retained by the Reformer not only because of their ancient origin, but because he believed that their preservation through the ages of corruption had been divinely ordained. In his *Short Form* of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, published in 1520, he emphasizes that not only the text, but even its arrangement was a gift of divine Providence. He said: —

"It did not come to pass without the special providence of God that, with reference to the common Christian, who cannot read the Scriptures, it was commanded to teach and to know the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, which three parts indeed thoroughly and completely embrace all that is contained in the Scripture and may ever be preached, all that a Christian needs to know, and this, too, in a form so brief and simple that no one can complain or offer the

excuse that it is too much, and that it is too hard for him to remember what is essential to his salvation. For in order to be saved, a man must know three things: First, he must know what he is to do and leave undone. Secondly, when he realizes that by his own strength he is unable to do it and leave it undone, he must know where he may take, seek, and find that which will enable him to do and to refrain. Thirdly, he must know how he may seek and obtain it, even as a sick man needs first of all to know what disease he has, what he may or may not do or leave undone. Thereupon he needs to know where the medicine is which will help him use one thing and abstain from another, like a healthy person. Fourthly, he must desire it, seek and get it, or have it brought to him. Accordingly the commandments teach a man to know his disease and to perceive that he is a sinner and a wicked man. Thereupon the Creed holds before his eyes and teaches him where to find the medicine, the grace, which will help him become pious that he may keep the commandments; and shows him God and His mercy as revealed and offered in Christ. Finally the Lord's Prayer teaches him how to ask for, get and obtain it, namely, by proper, humble, and trusting prayer. These three things comprise the entire Scriptures."

The arrangement of the different parts, then, gives answer to these questions: —

What shall I do?

What shall I believe?

How shall I pray and be sure that God will hear me?

But a fourth question remains: How will God nourish my spiritual life? This question is answered by the addition of the fourth, fifth, and sixth Chief Parts. We have noted that, while Luther was occupied with his catechetical labors, he had to contend with Anabaptists and other fanatics, who claimed immediate revelations and despised the general means of grace. He correctly estimated the danger to Protestantism which lay in this new movement. He perceived that the Reformation would end in confusion and religious anarchy unless the Church stood firmly grounded upon the written Word and the Sacraments. In consequence of this controversy with the fanatics, Luther added as supplements of the ancient three Chief Parts the portions treating Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Confession.

In the Large Catechism, where Baptism and the Lord's Supper appear as appendices, Luther emphasizes the fact that the first three Chief Parts form the kernel of the Catechism, but that instruction in Baptism and the Lord's Supper must also be imparted. "These" (first three), says he, "are the most necessary parts, which one should first learn to repeat word for word. . . . Now,

when these three parts are apprehended, it behooves a person also to know what to say concerning our Sacraments, which Christ Himself instituted, Baptism, and the holy body and blood of Christ, namely, the text which Matthew and Mark record at the close of their gospels, when Christ said farewell to His disciples and sent them forth." Luther regarded a correct knowledge of Baptism and the Lord's Supper not only as useful, but as necessary. Beginning his explanation of the Fourth Chief Part, he remarks: "We have now finished the three Chief Parts of the common Christian doctrine. Besides these we have yet to speak of our two Sacraments instituted by Christ, of which also every Christian ought to have at least an ordinary, brief instruction, because without them there can be no Christian; although, alas! hitherto no instruction concerning them has been given."

Thus Luther materially enlarged the Catechism. True, as Dr. Bente has pointed out, several prayer- and confession-books, which appeared in the late Middle Ages, also treat of the Sacraments. As for the people, however, it was considered sufficient for laymen to be able to recite the names of the seven Roman sacraments. Hence Luther, in the passage cited from the Large Catechism, declares that in Popery practically nothing of Baptism and the Lord's Supper was taught, certainly nothing worth while or wholesome.

Now let us survey a little more in detail the arrangement of the text of the Chief Parts.

To begin with, we note that there is a difference in the text of the Decalog as compared with the text found in Reformed catechisms. Assuming that the reader has Luther's text handy for reference, the text as given in the Heidelberg Catechism and in the Presbyterian (Westminster) Catechism is here reprinted for the purpose of comparison: —

The Preface.

I am the Lord, thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

The First Commandment.

Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.

The Second Commandment.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.

The Third Commandment.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

The Fourth Commandment.

Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day and hallowed it.

The Fifth Commandment.

Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord, thy God, giveth thee.

The Sixth Commandment.

Thou shalt not kill.

The Seventh Commandment.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

The Eighth Commandment.

Thou shalt not steal.

The Ninth Commandment.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

The Tenth Commandment.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

Comparing this text with that of the Lutheran Catechism, the following differences are revealed: —

1) The Reformed Catechism contains the prohibition of the making of graven images, but retains the total number of ten by drawing the Ninth and the Tenth Commandment (Lutheran style) into one.

2) The Lutheran text omits several sentences found in the first four commandments.

3) There are minor changes in the way of transpositions, etc.

Which of these two arrangements of the Decalog should be given the preference? We note: —

1) That, while the Decalog was divided into "ten words," we find in the Bible no basis for a certain system of numbering the commandments or of determining their respective position (compare Matt. 19, 18. 19 with Mark 10, 19).

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Kleiner
Catechißmus,
Für die liebe Jugend
Mit
Schönen figüren Summarien
und Current Schrifft

Zum Schreiben und lesen
eingerichtet.

EISENBERG,
Druckts und verlegts Joh. Zacharias Kleinhans,
Buchdrucker daselbst.

Catechism in Print and Script.
Printed at Eisenberg in 1728.

2) The Greek Catholic and the Reformed churches divide the commandments as in the Presbyterian Catechism (above), while the Catholic and Lutheran churches have retained the division made by Augustine, about A. D. 400. In favor of this division the following points are urged: In the text of the commandments, Ex. 20, 5 reads: "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them," and this pronoun, in the plural, can only refer to the "gods" (v. 3), not to "graven image" (v. 4). Thus the whole construction of the sentence shows that it is all one continuous thought, from v. 2 to 6. Again, the little signs by which the Jews indicated the relation of sentences show that the Ninth and Tenth were treated as separate commandments, while the First Commandment and the prohibition of images did not have these marks of separation. It is reasonable to assume that the Jews had retained the correct tradition regarding this point.

However, the numbering of the commandments is not divisive of church-fellowship, since the Scriptures do not demand any specific numbering.

But how about the changes which Luther made in the Decalog?

To begin with, he eliminated all those things which were intended for the Jews only. The fact that Israel is referred to in the preface to the Ten Commandments and again in the Fourth Com-

mandment has no bearing on the Christian life; hence these references are omitted. The making of graven images representing God was meant for the Jews only, who hardly would have resisted the temptation to worship such images like the heathen nations round about them. Christians are freed from such special legislation. For Sabbath-day Luther substituted holy-day and thereby counteracted the tendency to a legalistic insistence on keeping holy a certain day of the week. Finally, we note that the threat of divine wrath upon transgressors and the promise of reward have been removed from their original place (in the prohibition of images). Luther has placed this threat and promise at the end of the Decalog as an answer to the question: "What does God say concerning these Commandments?" This certainly implies no change of meaning, but emphasizes the fact that the threat as well as the promise applies to the transgression and keeping of the entire Law.

The crowning achievement of Luther's catechetical efforts is found in his arrangement and exposition of the Creed. We have already noted that in the Middle Ages the Creed was broken up into twelve sections, each being treated as independent particles unrelated to each other. Luther divides the Creed into three parts and groups the entire material around the three great works of divine love — Creation, Redemption, and Sanctifi-

cation. In his explanation of each article he connects all the several particles, subordinates them to the main thought, conceives them as the organic members of a unit, and sets forth, in a manner truly classical, the significance of the whole for the Christian life. Thus in the First Article the idea of God's fatherhood governs the entire explanation, so rich in devotional and practical content. The Second Article is governed by the thought that the several events of the life of Christ there mentioned are of the utmost significance when they are kept together under the viewpoint of Christ's redeeming work. From the pedagogical standpoint the palm must be awarded to Luther's treatment of the Third Article. To quote Professor Reu: "In the eyes of all previous catechists, a few Church Fathers only excepted, the Third Article fell apart into five distinct particles, which were placed alongside of each other in coordinate relation. Luther, discovering and demonstrating the underlying unity, without straining a single particle, found by means of it the outlines of a truly evangelical way of salvation; that is, the outlines of sanctification — the guidance of souls to Christ as their Lord and Savior by divine acts covering both time and eternity. For through the Church, through the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and reception into life eternal, is wrought the one work of the Holy Spirit, who,

in the past, has thus brought us to Christ, in the present brings us daily to Him again, and in the future will bring us to Him fully for all eternity."

That the Small Catechism did not spring from Luther's mind finished and complete as the result of a single effort we have noted in former chapters. In particular, the part called "Of the Office of the Keys and Confession" underwent some changes before it was given its now traditional place. It sometimes appeared as the Fifth, sometimes as the Sixth Chief Part in the various early editions. In the first book-edition it did not appear at all, neither in the Small nor in the Large Catechism. But the second Wittenberg edition, of 1529, appeared "augmented with a new instruction and admonition concerning Confession." Likewise the "augmented and improved" Small Catechism of 1529, superscribed "Enchiridion," contained a "Short Form How the Unlearned Shall Confess to the Priest." This "Form" was not to serve the pastor in admonishing, etc., but was intended for Christians who were going to confession. Possibly it was one of the charts which Roerer, March 16, mentioned as novelties. The addition of this part was, no doubt, caused by Luther himself. This is supported by the fact that Sauermann's translation, which appeared by Luther's "advice and order," also contained it. Luther placed the part of Confession between Baptism and

the Lord's Supper, thereby actually making this the Fifth and the Lord's Supper the Sixth Chief Part. And when later on (for in Luther's edition the chief parts are not numbered) the figures were added, Confession could but receive the number 5 and the Lord's Supper number 6. Thus, then, the sequence of the Six Chief Parts, as found in the Book of Concord, was, in a way, chosen by Luther himself.

The three questions regarding the Office of the Keys were not formulated by Luther. They are found in the *Nuernberg Text-booklet* of 1531. But as they are in complete agreement with Luther's doctrine of absolution, they were soon recognized as a valuable addition and have since retained their place in the Lutheran Catechism. In the Table of Duties, Luther takes up the different stations that are fundamental to the welfare of society. He quotes Scripture to show how we should act in the station in which God has placed us. It is practical Christianity that is taught in these paragraphs. The general principles of Christianity are applied to the every-day life of pastors, teachers, officers of the government, subjects, husbands, wives, parents, children, employees, masters, young people, widows, and Christians in general.

The Table of Duties was in itself a reformatory achievement. It dealt a deadly blow to the pre-

tensions of the Roman priesthood. As Professor Tanner says: —

"In Luther's days there was a double standard for Christian life, one superior to the other. The teaching of the Church was that the highest Christian life was lived by the priests and monks and nuns, those who withdrew themselves from the ordinary duties of men and supposedly gave themselves exclusively to spiritual duties. They were in a class by themselves. All those who were not priests and monks and nuns lived an inferior spiritual life. The life in the home, on the farm, and in the shops was looked upon as an inferior life spiritually.

"This double standard caused a great deal of harm. By setting up such an unscriptural classification, the ordinary duties of life were branded as sinful. It robbed the worker of the joy of his work. It took away from the ordinary man the happy consciousness that he, too, was serving God. It falsified the teachings of Christ that all Christians are the salt of the earth, in whatever position they are. It placed a deadening hand upon human progress.

"We thank God that through the Reformation the one standard of Christian life taught in the Bible was restored. The ordinary every-day life is the workshop where the Holy Spirit gives each the opportunity to exercise his faith, his love, and his

hope, where Christian characters are built. A man in the shop or on the farm, a mother in her house, if they are Christians, are serving God just as truly and just as well-pleasingly as any minister. It is not a question of what kind of work we do, but how we do our work."

The exact date of the first appearance of the Table of Duties is not known. As indicated by its name, this collection of Scriptural texts first appeared in poster form, very probably in April, 1529.

The twenty Questions and Answers in Christian Doctrine, so far as is known, first appeared in 1549. Since 1558 they form an appendix to the Small Catechism. The *Nota:* "These questions and answers," etc., first appeared in the edition of the year 1551. And in 1560 they appeared for the first time in a Wittenberg edition of the Small Catechism. A Wittenberg proof-reader in 1566 maintains that Luther himself did not contribute these questions and answers, but that they are the work of an Erfurt theologian, Lange by name, who died in 1548. The question of authorship is not yet settled, prominent authorities having taken sides both for and against Luther's authorship.

As for the distinction between the Large and the Small Catechism, regarding their purpose, little need be said. Both books were intended for the plain people. The Small Catechism was to be given into the hands of the children, while the

Large Catechism was intended for the preachers, teachers, and parents, with a view to teaching them by example how to expound the articles of the Christian doctrine for the simple-minded.

In particular, the Large Catechism was to enable the less educated pastors in the villages and in the country to do justice to their sacred duty. The instructions of the Visitors called for regular Catechism sermons. For this purpose Luther sought to furnish the preachers with material. From the Large Catechism they were to learn how to deliver simple, plain sermons on the Five Chief Parts. The Small Catechism, on the other hand, was to be placed in the hands of the children, who were to use and to memorize it at home and to bring it with them for instruction in the church. Throughout, the emphasis on parental instruction is dominant. Even while in the act of writing the Large Catechism — as we have seen — it occurred to Luther that, even with this outline of Christian doctrine in hand, parents were in need of a text-book containing questions and answers adapted for catechizing the children. This, undoubtedly, was the reason why the Small Catechism was rapidly completed before the Large, which had been begun first. Luther intended parents to use it, first of all for their own instruction and edification, but also for the purpose of enabling them to discharge their duty by their children and household.

CHAPTER V.

Conservatism and Progress.

"We have remained with the true ancient Church. You — Romanists — have fallen away from us, from the ancient Church. You have inaugurated a new church, not we."

These propositions, written in 1541, Luther defended in the course of his fierce attack upon Henry VIII of England. It was his contention from the outset — and he was willing to stake the success of his life's work upon the proposition — that the Church of the Reformation was simply a revival of apostolic Christianity. Likewise regarding his Catechism, Luther insisted that he had simply preserved a legacy of the fathers.

Not a new catechism did he submit, but the old. As he said in his book of the *German Mass,* 1526: "I cannot suggest any better course of instruction than that which has existed from the beginning of Christianity and remains to the present day: the

Decalog, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer." And in his Large Catechism he says: "The good fathers or the apostles, as may be the case, had in this way summarized Christian doctrine and life, knowledge and ability." The restoring of the ancient catechism, in a purified and popular form, was the end and aim of all his catechetical labors.

Luther was a conservative, not a radical. *The Theology of the Conservative Reformation* is the apt title given by Charles P. Krauth to his masterful exposition of the Lutheran Confessions. Luther did not cast out the good with the bad. He had no sympathies with the religious Bolsheviki of his time, the Anabaptists, to whom he addressed such words as these: "We confess that even under the rule of the Papacy there was retained the truly Holy Scriptures, the true Baptism, the true Sacrament of the Altar, the true Office of the Keys, the true ministry, and the true catechism, such as the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Articles of the Creed." What Luther intends to emphasize is the preservation, in the midst of antichristian rule, of the text of the orthodox three Chief Parts.

What, then, did Luther supply as additions to the medieval catechism (this word standing not for a book, of course, but in a more general sense for religious instruction)? And what did he eliminate?

In what did his reformation of the catechism consist?

Essentially, this Reformation consisted in eliminating from the catechism the pagan ideas which it had absorbed under the Papacy, in particular, the Roman doctrine of salvation by works. In the second place, he canceled with one fell swoop five of the seven sacraments of Romanism. He abolished penance, but retained confession and absolution. He abolished confirmation as a sacrament, but retained it as a churchly custom. He eradicated every reference to priestly ordination, by which the clergy had arrogated to themselves mediatorship between God and man. He lifted matrimony upon a pedestal, from which it had fallen through the fictitious honors paid to celibacy, but struck it from the list of sacraments. Extreme unction suffered the same fate. Thus only Baptism and the Lord's Supper remained, which alone, as Luther pointed out, had the three requisites of a sacrament: divine institution, earthly elements, and heavenly grace. The conservative character of the Reformation becomes evident in this retention of what is genuine, and rejection of what was counterfeit, in the sacramental system of his age.

Luther did not destroy the venerable forms handed down from the early ages of Christianity. He took these ancient vessels and filled them anew with Biblical, evangelical content. His explana-

tions, taken from, and based upon, the Scriptures, *made Gospel* of the ancient catechism text. He vivified the concept "Christian instruction of youth" and placed the emphasis on Christian. Not any kind of religious instruction, not any kind of catechism would serve; only the true Biblical doctrine, the recovery of which was the essence of the Reformation, was hereafter to be given domicile in Christian schools and homes. It was not sufficient to tell the children that the Ten Commandments must be kept, that God must be confessed as the Triune God and Jesus as the Son of God, but above all, that our salvation depends not on efforts of our own, but on grace, based upon the merits of Christ and accepted by faith; that the truly Christian life will grow forth from such faith as naturally as fruit grows upon a tree in the summertime. To bring the newly, rediscovered Gospel into the hearts of men and thus make them happy in this life and in the next, that, in simple words, was the purpose of Luther's Catechisms and is their key-note. It was the lack of this element in Christian instruction that characterized the Church under the Papacy. As a result, both school and home had become utterly incapable as agencies of Christian instruction.

We are able to sum up the elements of Conservatism and Progress observable in Luther's Catechisms somewhat as follows: —

Luther did not create the three Chief Parts; they existed long before he wrote his Catechisms. However, —

1) He preached, expounded, and popularized these elements of Christian instruction in a manner to which the Church had been unaccustomed these many centuries.

2) He supplied the important sections on Baptism, Confession, and the Lord's Supper.

3) He knocked off the barnacles of Roman error and superstition.

4) He eliminated the Romanistic interpretations, which made of the catechism only another crushing load upon heart and conscience.

5) He recovered the evangelical interpretation of those ancient confessional phrases.

6) He brought about a general revival of catechetical method and thus laid the foundation not only for modern schools and popular education, but, above all, for a sound indoctrination of youth in the saving doctrine of the apostles.

CHAPTER VI.

The Supremacy of the Small Catechism.

Born out of the struggles of a soul wrestling with God and at last conquering by faith, as Jacob did on the bank of Jabbok, the Small Catechism of Martin Luther possesses a unique vital quality.

It was not composed in the meditations of a cloistered cell; it grew out of the life and experience of a great man of God.

What is it that gives this book of instruction, written four hundred years ago, its unique position in Christendom to-day? Its merits are not only extolled by critics and historians. There is many a book which receives the praise of experts as a notable achievement, but which belongs rather to the monuments of the past than to the active forces of present-day life. Even in the Reformed state churches of Germany the official Heidelberg Catechism is very rarely used in the schools. Luther's Catechism has taken its place. Other parts of Germany have their own manuals of instruction or explanations, but Luther's Chief Parts are basic also to these. All Lutheran

churches use it the world over, and there is to-day no attempt to displace it.

What are the outstanding merits which give the *Enchiridion* its unchallenged supremacy?

We note, to begin with, the absence of polemics from Luther's exposition of the Chief Parts. This is really an astounding fact when one considers the fierce conflicts with the Pope and with Protestant fanatics out of which it was born. The great bulk of Luther's writings was polemical. Even his exegetical works and sermons have a militant note. Of this, every trace was avoided in the Small Catechism. One might expect the Reformer to inveigh against self-chosen good works in the discussion of the Decalog. It would seem natural that those who usurped the position of the divine Mediator in the Church, the Popes and bishops, would be referred to in the Second Article, and their perversion of the way of salvation in the Third. At the very time when the Catechism was being written, the Baptists and other fanatics, as well as the adherents of Zwingli, were attacking the Scriptural doctrine regarding Baptism and Communion; yet there is no reference to the great sacramentary conflict in these sections of the Catechism. Throughout, the statements are positive. Fundamental truths are stressed. Old and young are made to feel the worth of simple godliness, the beauty of personal faith, the supremacy of Christ and of His Word.

We would not decry the use of polemics, which is simply the defense of saving truth against its adversaries, and without which the Reformation would have been impossible. But in the Catechism we have simple affirmations of that which constitutes Christian belief and life. And this is its chief merit, which lifts it above the age which saw its birth and gives it a timeless quality. It is as up to date in 1929 as it was in 1529.

A second merit is its evangelical quality. Hardeland has pointed out that the Catechism is permeated with one thought, that of justification by faith. It is contained in the First Commandment, according to Luther's own fuller interpretation of "fear, love, and trust." The entire Decalog is thus based upon the fundamental truth of Christianity. All three articles, as explained by Luther, are saturated with the same doctrine. This is true in a most eminent degree also of the last three Chief Parts. "Everything has as its presupposition the forgiveness of sins. Throughout, it breathes the assurance of faith." "That we are reconciled to God through Christ and through faith have forgiveness of sins and the righteousness which avails before God is not one article of faith among many others, but it is the A and O, the beginning and the end, the source and goal, of Catechism instruction." (Hardeland.)

As indicated, this evangelical note prevails where we should expect it least, in the explanations of the Ten Commandments. Each of them begins with "We should fear and love God." Fear is veneration, childlike reverence, and supplies, together with love, the right motives for moral conduct. Thereby the Roman type of piety, in which work was added to work, obedience to obedience, performance to performance, until finally a sufficiency of merits was reached, was wiped out. Christian life is not a series of separate works, but a unity. And its essence is faith. As Luther said in one of his lectures on Deuteronomy: "Faith in the words and promises of God is everything. For this reason we have said in the Catechism that true worship consists in the fear and love of God. This is commanded in the first precept, from which all others flow. The works of the Second Table, such as refraining from adultery, murder, theft, cannot be performed without faith. Without the First Commandment all others are nothing. If you obey the First, in other words, if you trust in Christ, you are justified; yet no one keeps this commandment except through the Holy Spirit, who draws us unto the Gospel." Notice how Luther preached faith both as a receptive organ and as an operative force. He simply demands Christian faith as a condition of a God-pleasing life and thus struck the keynote of Protestant ethics.

Our point is made clear by a comparison of the treatment of the Decalog in the Shorter Westminster Catechism (Presbyterian). Concerning the First Commandment it says that it "requires us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God and our God and to worship and glorify Him accordingly," and that God "taketh notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other god." The absence of any specifically Christian element is here at once evident. Nor does the Westminster Catechism contain any such unifying thought as the Lutheran "We should fear and love God in order that." The spiritual meaning of the Third Commandment is lost in a wordy prohibition of "worldly employments" on the Sabbath-day, "of profaning the day by idleness, unnecessary works, and recreations."

Luther throughout emphasizes the positive. Christianity is not to refrain from doing a certain number of things, but consists in a faith and love that does God's will. Likewise in the Creed the facts of salvation are brought into a vital relation to the life of the individual. A belief in God is professed; but Luther's entire explanation is a prayer of gratitude for all that the Christian owes to God in the way of temporal blessings. Similarly in the Second Article and in the Third, the explanations voice the heartfelt assurance of the believer in the redemptive work of Christ and in the

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Spirit's sanctifying influence. These explanations are simply the Amen of the soul to the message of the Gospel.

Truly evangelical ideas permeate also the Lord's Prayer. The explanation of the Introduction was added only in 1531, but is one of the most resplendent jewels of the entire Catechism. Personal appropriation is once more the key-note of the remaining Chief Parts.

Without this evangelical understanding of precept and doctrine, of Word, prayer, and Sacrament, the *Enchiridion* would never have gained and maintained its significance as a book of religious instruction.

To these merits must be added the consummate literary form which characterizes Luther's explanations. As in his translation of the Bible, so in the writing of the Catechism, Luther reveals himself as a master of language. This is evident even in translations, but can be appreciated only through a study of the originals. What a wonderful "feeling" for harmony and rhythm is shown in the familiar combinations *"luegen und truegen," "reichlich und taeglich," "lehret und lebet," "mit aller Notdurft und Nahrung des Leibes und Lebens," "behuetet und erhalten," "geheiligt und erhalten," "erworben und gewonnen," "Tod und Teufel," "gnaediger und guter Wille," "unwuerdig*

und ungeschickt," "*wuerdig und wohlgeschickt,*" "*in Worten und Werken,*" etc. Besides these phrases, with their artful alliterations, so well adapted for memorizing, we have expressions which gather into striking combinations that which is related in thought, as: "love and trust," "hold in love and esteem," "help and befriend," "property and business," "heaven and earth," "life and death," "liveth and reigneth," "thank and praise," "goodness and mercy," "here in time and yonder in eternity," "teach and live," "forgive and do good," "overcome and gain victory," "under the bread and wine." Then such triads as "redeemed, purchased, and won"; "from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil"; — read from this point of view the entire explanation of the Second Article, which has been called the most beautiful sentence in the German language. A modern critic, Gillhoff, says: "There is a strange rise and fall, cadence and rhythm, in these sentences, to which nothing else in our literature can be compared. And these pleasing rhythms clothe a body of thoughts which by no means can be said to invite musical, rhythmical language. It is a masterful use of the language of the common people, combined with a genius for the tonal qualities of language."

Speaking in particular of the Second Article, Bang, in 1909, said in his lecture "*Luthers Kleiner*

Katechismus ein Kleinod der Volksschule — Luther's Small Catechism a Jewel of the Common School": —

"The Catechism is precious also for the reason that Luther in the explanations strikes a personal, subjective, confessional note. When at home I read the text of the Second Article in silence and then read Luther's explanation aloud, it seems to me as if a hymn rushing heavenward arises from the lapidary record of facts. It is no longer the language of the word, but of the sound as well. The text reports objectively, like the language of a Roman, writing tables of law. The explanation witnesses and confesses objectively. It is Christianity transformed into flesh and blood. It sounds like an oath of allegiance to the flag. In its ravishing tone we perceive the marching tread of the myriads of believers of nineteen centuries; we see them moving onward under the fluttering banner of the cross in war, victory, and peace. And we, too, by a power which cannot be expressed in words, are drawn into the great, blessed experience of our ancestors and champions. Who would dare to lay his impious hands on this consecrated, inherited jewel and rob the coming generations of it?!"

It has often been said, but bears restatement here, that Luther's beautiful explanations are cast in so personal a mold that they fairly invite the

attitude of prayer. In this respect no confessional writing has ever approached Luther's Small Catechism. Indeed, Luther refers repeatedly to "praying the Catechism." We have seen that it arose in part from booklets and tracts which were intended as substitutes for the prayer-manuals in use during the Middle Ages (Short Form; Prayer-Booklet, see Chapter 2 above). Indeed, the Catechism has been turned directly into a book of prayer, also in English translation. Rev. Albert T. W. Steinhaeuser in the *Lutheran Church Review,* July, 1926, submitted "Luther's Small Catechism as a manual of devotion." The following extracts will illustrate:

The Second Commandment.

O Lord God, who commandest us not to take Thy name in vain, grant us to fear and love Thee, so that we may not curse, swear, conjure, nor deceive by Thy name, but may call upon Thy name in every time of trouble and use it in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

The Third Article.

O God the Holy Ghost, who when I could not by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him, didst call me through the Gospel, enlighten me with Thy gifts, and sanctify and preserve me in true faith, etc.

The Seventh Petition.

Our Father in heaven, deliver us, we pray Thee, from all manner of evil, whether it touch our body or soul, our property or good name; and at last, when the hour of death shall come, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this vale of sorrow to Thyself in heaven; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Both Catechisms are symbols of the Church, having been formally adopted into the body of Lutheran Confessions when the Book of Concord was published in 1580. Here the Catechisms have their place between the Smalcald Articles and the Formula of Concord. Like the Smalcald Articles, the Catechisms have attained the standing of a creed through their own merit, without any resolutions of Church councils. The Formula of Concord simply states a historical fact when it asserts: "We also confess the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther, as they are included in Luther's works, as the Bible of the laity, wherein everything is comprised which is treated at greater length in Holy Scripture and is necessary for a Christian man to know for his salvation." The authors of the Formula justified the confessional standing of the Catechisms because "they have been unanimously approved and received by all the churches adhering to the Augsburg Confession and have been publicly used in churches, schools, and in (private)

houses, and moreover, because the Christian doctrine from God's Word is comprised in them in the most correct and simple way and, in like manner, is explained, as far as necessary (for simple laymen)."

Enemies of Christianity have attempted to bury the Catechism text under rationalistic interpretations or have boldly attacked the Small Catechism as no longer worthy of acceptance as a symbol of the faith or as a book of popular instruction and have endeavored to supplant it with other manuals. All to no avail. Countless books of instruction have seen the light of day, have been given the test of experience in home and school, have failed, and are forgotten. In his introduction to the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church, J. T. Mueller said (1890): "Countless is the number of fake-catechisms which were published within the last fifty years. But they were products of their age and are forgotten, while Luther's Catechisms have triumphantly maintained their position and will be a means in the hands of true teachers to aid in the work of rejuvenating the Church."

The Small Catechism is truly a confession of the Church and is the most popular, universally accepted in the world, being confessed by more lips than any other. Its manly, bold freedom of utterance renders it singularly fitting as a profession of strong personal faith. No one can mis-

understand its phrases, its spirit. It seems to glow with a perennial youth.

What a marvelous book! Which other confessional symbol in the world has a devotional quality?

Which other confessional writing is at the same time a manual for childhood instruction?

What manual of Christian instruction has that profound appeal to the life of the soul which speaks from such phrases as "God would hereby tenderly invite us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children," etc.?

And if here and there depths are sounded which cannot be fathomed by a childish comprehension, is it an error in pedagogy to let Christian children obtain a glimpse of the far reaches of Christian knowledge, of the depths of wisdom that await, for their sounding, the experience of later years?

CHAPTER VII.

In Home, School, and Church.

Luther spent much time with his family. He fully realized the duty of the parents towards the children. He remarks occasionally, "Rightfully we say that God has blessed us by the gift of a child, but how few of us will appreciate and understand this blessing!"

He was a close observer, was never tired of watching the children, of studying their characters and learning from them. Again and again he writes of their doings and speaks of them in his Table Talk. They teach him many spiritual truths, more particularly simplicity, purity, and confidence, and furnish a never-ceasing source of illustration. To give them a good religious education was his prime object. "It does not matter whether we make our children heirs of great wealth; we should rather strive to make them wise, so that they can make good of whatever they may inherit. We parents are great fools for leaving to our children many worldly goods, but neglecting to

train them in the fear of God, in self-discipline and honesty."

His method of education was guided by two maxims. We have already quoted his saying: "Christ, wishing to educate men, became a man, and if we wish to educate children, we must become like children." And in the second place, thinking back, no doubt, of his own dreary childhood days, he demands that "the apple must lie next to the rod."

Luther did, indeed, become like a child among his children. He answered their childish questions appropriately, telling them stories, writing beautiful childlike letters, when away from home, and never returning from a trip without bringing some small gifts. But he could also be severe when it was necessary. "I would rather have a dead son than one who has gone wrong," he said, and again, "How it spoils children if we let them have their own will and fail to punish them!" Upon a certain occasion he punished his oldest son Hans by forbidding him to come into his father's presence until he had asked forgiveness.

The influence of the home life was, in his opinion, of the greatest importance to the welfare of the country. We do well to-day to heed the following counsel: "If children are not trained to obedience in their own homes, it will never be brought about that a whole city, country, or king-

dom will be governed well. Family government is the most fundamental government, whence all other forms of government originate. Where there is no good root, there can grow neither a good tree nor good fruits."

Again he writes: "Children are the most lovely fruits and powerful bonds of marriage, and confirm and preserve the bond of love." "Married people should remember that they can perform no better and no more useful work for the glory of God, for the benefit of both Church and State, aye, for themselves and their children, than by properly bringing up their children."

In his writings, especially in his sermons, he never wearied of admonishing the parents to take a lively interest in the training of their children. He clearly perceived that without their cooperation all his efforts on behalf of sound indoctrination must fail. "If the parents or guardians," he said, as early as 1526, "will not provide instruction for their children, no catechetical training will ever be established." Especially his Visitation, referred to in a former chapter, helped him recognize this fundamental need. If the children were to memorize and understand the catechism, they must be individually called upon to recite. To a limited degree this could be done in church. Here and there schools were being established. But all this would be productive of but little results, unless the

parents collaborated. They were the key to the situation. They had opportunity at morning and evening prayers, at table, etc. They were the natural teachers of the children, ordained by God Himself. Incessantly, therefore, Luther urges the fathers and mothers not only to bring their children to church, where the Catechism was explained on Sunday afternoons, but themselves to teach the children. "The Christian home," he insisted, "must become church and school, the housefather being bishop and teacher. Every father in his own home is bishop. Strive to help us perform the ministry in the home as we perform it in the church!" (November 30, 1528).

He blames the parents for the prevailing ignorance. "They don't care!" "Let the head of the household teach the servants, let the mother teach the maids, let both teach the children! Beware lest you neglect your office!" And he sums it up in his Introduction to the Large Catechism: "At least once a week let the housefather examine his children and servants, to see how much they have learned; he is under divine command either to teach them himself or to provide for their instruction."

Parallel with these admonitions to parents the flaming appeals of the Reformer for the establishment of Christian schools rang out over an awakening Germany. "Schools are indispensable," he

proclaimed. "We can do without mayors, princes, and noblemen, but not without schools; for these must rule the world." "If I had to resign preaching and my other duties, there is no office I would rather have than that of a schoolteacher. For I know that next to the ministry it is the most useful, greatest, and best; and I am not sure which of the two is to be preferred." Luther's ideas of popular education went forth like a flash of lightning into the darkness of the schools and kindled a fire in the minds of the thinking populace of Germany. In all parts of the country schools were established and maintained, and in order to systematize the course of teaching in the various schools, Luther was called upon to draw up school schedules and to explain the methods of teaching, which he cheerfully did.

With true insight into the fundamentals of pedagogy, he stressed the need of *memorizing* the Catechism. He was satisfied with a minimum — the first three Chief Parts and the words of Institution, in the sections on Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He by no means overlooked the need of explanation and application. But as a foundation of thorough instruction he demanded that the teachers drill the Catechism text. As he says in his Introduction to the Small Catechism: "Young and simple persons must be taught a definite text, otherwise, if you teach a certain form this year and another next, you will simply confuse them, and

your labor will be lost. Settle on a certain form and stick to it forever, then drill it word for word until they are able to know and recite it."

All church constitutions after 1529 charged the minister with the duty of teaching the Catechism during the Sunday afternoon service, also in outlying stations. Especially in these branch congregations the sexton or verger had to substitute for the minister. This was found so satisfactory that the services of the verger were generally engaged also on week-days for the same purpose. Now one thing led to another. In order to study the Catechism, the children had to read. Hence it was the sexton's first duty to teach the art of reading and writing, and the sexton had become school-teacher. Out of this little germ was developed the great popular school system of Germany. It is not too much to say that this system is a gift of Luther's Catechism to that nation and to the world. Only thirty-seven years after the first publication of Luther's Catechism, Mathesius was able to say: —

"There have now been printed of the Catechism — praise be to God! — more than a hundred thousand copies in this and other countries and are being used in all academies and public schools!"

CHAPTER VIII.

The Triumphant Course of the Catechism Through the Countries of Europe.

The first edition of Luther's Catechism in book form is not, as one might suppose, our familiar Enchiridion, but is a translation of it into Low German. This edition was printed as early as April, 1529, while the High-German Catechism was still in the form of posters. Other editions in Low German followed, testifying to the tremendous demand for this compend of Christian doctrine.

Every effort was made both by pastors and rulers to make Luther's Catechism accessible to their people. When people were unable to speak either High or Low German, the Catechism would be translated into whatever dialect was the spoken language of the people. As, for instance, in the regions about the Rhine, Dutch was the common tongue. Immediately the Catechism was translated into Dutch. On the islands of the North Sea,

a Friesian dialect was spoken which to the present day is hardly intelligible to other Germans. But the Catechism was translated into Friesian for the benefit of these sparsely settled islands. In other parts of Germany there had been for many centuries settlers who had come from Russia, Poland, Lithuania, and other Eastern countries. For each of these settlements of foreigners the Catechism was translated into their own particular dialect.

These translations of the Small Catechism were made for the purpose of making the truth accessible to every one in his native tongue. As a matter of fact, among most of these tongues the Catechism was the first book ever published. Luther's Catechism is the oldest monument in the language of the ancient Wends, as also in that of the ancient Prussians. In other words, the beginning of education and culture in many parts of Germany is to be traced to the introduction of Luther's Catechism.

But all this was within the confines of Germany. We shall now follow the triumphant course of the Catechism through the countries of Europe.

"The Small and the Large Catechism shall forever be preserved unto the churches of this country," was the regulation adopted for Lower Austria after the Reformation had swept Romanism from power. Even more successful was

the Reformation movement in Upper Austria. Here Luther stood in active correspondence with the leaders of the nobility, and for political reasons the emperor was compelled to grant religious toleration. By a strict ordinance the teachers were held to teach the Catechism "purely and simply, without any additions or omissions." In the interior of Austria the Reformation likewise made astounding progress. It was customary to conduct a catechetical hour on Sunday afternoons. The six Chief Parts were recited in the form of questions and answers, then followed a sermon on the Catechism, then two pupils would recite a part of the Catechism responsively, then there followed a catechization of the children and young people. A hymn and the benediction closed the service. (Many of us remember the *Christenlehre* conducted in every detail in accordance with this program in churches of our far-Western continent.)

At an early date Luther had been in correspondence with noblemen in Bohemia. Again, the victorious march of the newly recovered Gospel is recorded by the historians. First, the personal correspondence with the great Reformer. Then the sending of Christian preachers. Immediately after, the introduction of the purified service and of the Catechism. Catechisms giving the German or Latin text on one side of the page and the

Bohemian or Moravian on the other were in common use.

Crossing the boundary of Hungary, even during the lifetime of Luther, the Catechism was introduced as the official instruction book for all schools. It was the first book printed on the press of the Hungarian reformer Caspar Heltai. It is most gratifying to observe what these "Saxons" at the gate of the Turks accomplished by their schools; much more than many districts in the mother country of the Reformation, for even the villages had good schools and teachers. Then, crossing another international boundary, the Catechism winged its way onward into Roumania, where it appeared in the tongue of the people in 1544.

Also in Little Poland a translation of the Small Catechism appeared during Luther's life, soon followed by a translation into the Lithuanian and Russian tongues. And in Greater Poland the Catechism appeared as early as 1530, or one year after its first publication in Germany! And so we might go on with the story of the "Bible in Little," as it penetrated to the inhabitants of the Baltic provinces, to Courland, Livonia, and Esthonia.

The Scandinavian countries were at an early date under the influence of Luther's blessed work, the Reformation Church being recognized by Denmark and Norway as early as 1536. Four Danish

editions of the Catechism are recorded between 1532 and 1538. Curiously enough, one of the earliest prints fails to mention Luther on the title-page and simply announces itself as "Catechism of the Old Doctrine of the True Holy Church Together with a Few Christian Admonitions." Norway received a translation of her own in 1541. It was translated into Icelandic in 1562, into Swedish probably in 1568, and into Finnish about the same time, the exact date not being known.

And now England! In the very first year of their publication both the Small and the Large Catechism had been imported into the island kingdom. As is well known, Archbishop Cranmer of Canterbury espoused the Reformation faith about the same time when William Tyndale, a pupil of Luther, translated the Holy Scriptures into English. By Cranmer's catechism, published in 1548, Luther's book became the official catechism of the Church of England, and had it not been for the work of Reformed theologians, who brought political influence to bear, the Lutheran faith would have become dominant in Great Britain. However, the translation of the Catechism by Archbishop Cranmer is so notable an achievement that it deserves treatment in a separate chapter (see page 114).

The Netherlands, Belgium, and France likewise came under Reformed influence, rather than Lu-

theran, yet the Catechism of Martin Luther also in these countries helped break down the power of Romanism. In all the years of persecution by which the Protestant Church was harassed, Luther's Enchiridion was in use, either secretly or openly. If the henchmen of the Pope closed the print-shops of the evangelicals, there were plenty of printers in neighboring counties that supplied the demand for Luther's exposition of Christian doctrine. In some of these countries, as in parts of Germany, the catechism of the Reformer Brenz was used alongside of Luther's, the editions of both being almost beyond counting. In Spain the catechism of Brenz was placed upon the list of prohibited books in 1564, and about the same time Luther's Catechism was known and read in that country, as it was also in Italy, where in 1562 there appeared a version (printed at Tuebingen): *Catechismus pioccilo di Martin Luthero, verso dal Latino in lingua Italiana, per gli fanciugli.*

It cannot be doubted that the very name of the great Reformer aided in giving the Small Catechism this dissemination through Europe and the Northern Islands. But the mere name of the author would not account for the popularity of the book. Placing ourselves into the condition of the Church in that age, we can readily understand the causes which prompted its immediate and universal acceptance as the voice of evangelical

Christianity. The clergy as well as the masses, having been bred in the formalism and legalism of the Middle Ages, could not fail to appreciate the spiritual character of a book so saturated with faith in the justifying work of Christ, so clear in its statement of the basic principles of Christian conduct, so excellent in its linguistic form, so well adapted in every way as a handbook of Christian belief for young and old.

CHAPTER IX.

A Basketful of Catechisms.

Catechisms large and small, some of the size of the ordinary German Bible, others so small you can hide them in the palm of your hand; Catechisms 50, 100, 200, more than 300 years old;

Catechisms without and with explanations, some of these running to 500 questions and more; Catechisms with orthodox explanations and others densely overgrown with rationalistic rubbish (from the period of the Enlightenment, one hundred fifty years ago); Catechisms, German, Latin, English, Polish, Chinese, and Hindu, more than a 150 of them, some of them very rare; each of them standing for editions that must have run into thousands and ten thousands; and since few are more recent than 1850, once studied by eyes, and vivifying hearts, which have been dust and ashes these many years; — a basketful of them, a large laundry basket full; — this was the result of a simple request to the Librarian of Concordia Seminary that the writer be shown the collection of Lutheran Catechisms in our stack-room. From this remark-

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able collection I have taken an armful to my study, and as I turn their leaves, I am thinking aloud for the benefit of my readers.

One of the oldest of these catechisms is quite an oddity. It is the Small Catechism in four languages, printed in parallel columns: German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. I have asked the publisher to reproduce in facsimile the pages containing the opening of the Creed. Note the obsolete spelling in the German text and the vertical lines which take the place of commas. Next to the Hebrew text there is a column of Hebrew roots for the benefit of beginners in that language. The book is entitled *Catechismus Quadrilingus* and the editor was Magister Johan Claijs Hertzberger. The German text is that of Martin Luther, the Latin that of Sauermann, and the Greek that of Michael Neander. Hertzberger himself supplied the Hebrew translation. The Introduction, which is in Latin, stresses that the boys are to use this Catechism in the study of the Hebrew tongue. Luther, by the way, is called the Third Elijah and Prophet of Germany. The book was printed in Wittenberg in 1599 and the copy in our library was once the possession of Father Keyl.

If old Magister Hertzberger tried to drill the boys of 1599, probably with indifferent success, in the Hebrew language by means of the Catechism text, Magister Johannes Rhein tried to overcome the horrendous difficulties of Latin by printing the

Catechism in German and Latin on opposite pages and then following this up by printing the Latin text once more with the German equivalent following each word or phrase. Each section is then followed by an explanation of the vocables. The resulting layout is illustrated in facsimile, the selection chosen being the Tenth Commandment. Whether the scheme is to be recommended from the pedagogical standpoint might be questioned. If the boys of three hundred years ago in any way had the make-up of the Lutheran *Sextaner* of 1928, his love for the Catechism was not increased by making him identify the Latin verbal forms in connection with the teaching of Christian doctrine.

Still in the field of parallel editions, we have here a Polish-German edition printed in the year 1782 in Dresden. We show the title-page of this Catechism in a facsimile reproduction.

The urge to combine other useful instruction with the study of the Catechism seems to have been very strong. Here we have a little book of 176 pages containing Luther's Catechism, also the *Traubuechlein* and *Taufbuechlein,* the German text being given both in ordinary type and in script or longhand. Our reproductions, showing a title-page and also a page from the Lord's Prayer (Second Petition), will illustrate the scheme underlying this edition. The cuts are rather dreadful in execution. The one illustrating the Second Petition represents the Laborers in the Vineyard. The

Illustration from an Edition Printed in 1813 at Lauben.

Catechism was printed in Eisenberg in 1728, and the publisher notes in the introduction that by using this edition the teacher by a *single* effort can serve a threefold purpose, namely, the acquisition of the art of reading, that of writing, and the memorizing of the text.

Number five is a very portly volume containing the Catechism with no less than 569 questions and answers by way of explanation. In addition there are prayers in prose and rhyme arranged according to the church-year and according to Christian needs. This edition represents the famous *Nuernberger Kinderlehre*. It is an interleaved edition containing written memoranda by some preacher or schoolmaster who used this copy in the long, long ago. The book was printed in 1749.

The Catechism was reprinted countless times. Every little job-press which could figure with the trade of half a dozen congregations seems to have put its typesetters to work on a new edition. This accounts for the horrible typography of many of these Catechisms. It seems that the cuts which illustrated the five Chief Parts passed from print-shop to print-shop until finally they became mere smudges of printers' ink. In the Concordia Seminary collection there is an edition printed in 1813 at Lauben. The cut herewith reproduced illustrates the Ninth Commandment (Ahab and Naboth). The reproduction, in exact size, shows the very inferior quality of the illustrations often supplied

Woodcut Illustrating Third Commandment.
Printed at Frankfort in 1822.

with the text. This edition, by the way, contains the appendices *Traubuechlein* and *Taufbuechlein.*

Sometimes printers would resurrect cuts that had been used a century or more ago, as in the reprint of 1822, Frankfort, from which our picture of a church interior (Third Commandment) is taken.

The Seminary also owns a copy of the St. Petersburg edition of 1820, reprinted at Dresden in 1822. There is an apparatus of 470 questions and answers. This edition was published for the specific purpose of counteracting the indifferentism and rationalism which was engulfing the Lutheran Church in Germany during the first decades of the nineteenth century and which seems to have affected also the Lutherans living in Russia.

Next a few editions which have appeared in our own country.

Here is the second edition of the Catechism published at New Market, Va., in Solomon Henkel's print-shop, in 1816. The compilation of text and explanations was made by Paul Henkel. The book is printed from beautiful type and is in every way a creditable printer's job.

More than a hundred years ago a book printer in Canton, O., brought out an edition of Luther's Catechism, together with selected prayers and a set of questions and answers, the latter the so-called "Children's Examination," which was popular in the Kingdom of Wuertemberg. The book had the following title-page: —

Der Kleine Catechismus

des seligen
D. Martin Luthers
Nebst
den gewoehnlichen Morgen- Tisch- und Abend-Gebeten.
Welchem
Die Ordnung des Heils,
in einem Liede, in kurzen Saetzen, in Frag und Antwort, und in einer Tabelle;
Wie auch
eine Zergliederung des Catechismus,
das Wuertembergische
Kurze Kinder-Examen,
die Confirmation und Beichte
beygefueget;
Und
etliche Lieder, Freylinghausens Ordnung des Heils,
Das Gueldene A, B, C, der Kinder,
und
Die Sieben Buss-Psalmen,
angehaengt sind.
Zum Gebrauch der Jungen und Alten

Canton, (Ohio:)
Gedruckt bey Jacob Sala.
: 1822 :

A copy of this edition is in the possession of the writer. The Concordia Seminary library owns a copy of the 1829 edition, which is prefaced with introductory remarks by David Henkel, mainly in defense of the Lutheran arrangement and text of the Commandments as compared with the Reformed. This edition contains no explanations, but has the usual appendix of prayers in prose and rhyme.

At Sunnytown, Pa., Enos Benner published a *Kurze Erklaerung des kleinen Katechismus* in 1854 by resolution of the Synod of Pennsylvania, 1851. Professor W. Julius Mann headed the committee which produced the explanation appended to each section of Luther's text. The answers supplied are, as a rule, very long, sometimes covering half a page and more, and were evidently not intended to be memorized. In fact, this edition was not intended so much for the pupils as for the teachers, to serve as a handbook of interpretation.

One of the earliest reprints of the Catechism published for the Missouri Synod is the 1858 print of St. Louis, Mo., at the *Synodaldruckerei* of August Wiebusch and Son. This edition contains the Enchiridion only, without explanation.

The English versions published in the United States will receive more detailed mention in our next chapter. Of these early editions, our Library contains only the 1857 print of Baltimore

(Hanzsche Co.). This edition was gotten out by St. Peter's Congregation of the same city. It contains the Enchiridion only.

Possibly the most comprehensive explanation of the Catechism ever published is the Norwegian one by Pontoppidan. It runs to no less than 759 questions and answers, yet is, withal, a small book, since many of the questions and answers are very brief. The Bergen edition of 1854 is part of the lot comprised by our basketful of Catechisms.

A translation of the Catechism into Chinese was prepared by Rev. E. L. Arndt of the Missouri Synod Mission. We show the first page in facsimile.

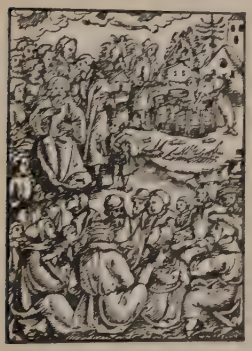
At Trivandrum, India, Luther's Small Catechism was printed in Malayalam, and at Nagercoil a translation into Tamil saw the light of day in its second edition during the same year, 1925. This edition contains the explanation of Schwan, at present the official text-book of the Missouri Synod.

Now that we have talked about Catechisms, German, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Polish, Norwegian, Chinese, and Hindu, let us approach a subject which must engage our more immediate interest, namely, the translation of the Catechism into English.

CHAPTER X.

The Catechism in English.

"The English Reformation was not inaugurated by disciples of Zwingli and Calvin, but by those of Luther, so that Luther, the great instrument of God in reforming the British Church, opened the way to England and Scotland to extricate themselves from papal servitude."



These words were written more than two hundred years ago by Nicolas Lithenius, a Swedish pastor of a Lutheran congregation in London. They are in agreement with the historical records. The first Protestants in England undoubtedly were Lutherans. Lutheran confessors in England were among the very first and noblest martyrs that glorified God in the age of the Reformation.

As soon as the mighty writings of Luther began to thunder against the Romish corruptions, not only the rumor of the events enacted on the Continent reached England and cheered many a groaning heart, but these writings themselves were

brought over, in many cases translated into English, and always read with the greatest eagerness. Bishop Burnet says in his famous History of the Reformation: "As these things [the Reformation] did spread much in Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, so their books came over into England, where there was much matter already prepared to be wrought on . . . by the opinions of the Lollards, between which and the doctrines of the Reformers there was great affinity. Many of them were translated into the English tongue, and were much read and applauded. This quickened the proceedings against the Lollards, and the inquiry against them became so severe that great numbers were brought into the toils of the bishops. If a man had spoken but a light word against the Roman Church, he was seized by the bishop's officers. And if they taught the children the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed in the common tongue, that was crime enough to bring them to the stake" (to be burned alive), "as it did six men and a woman at Coventry April 4, 1519. Longland, Bishop of Lincoln, caused several others to be burned."

In spite of these desperate measures the writings of Luther and such parts of the Bible as had been newly rendered into English, were read with avidity. There was a universal rush to the fountain of living waters the moment it was unsealed.

Every one that could, purchased the Book, and if he was unable to read himself, he got his neighbor to read it to him. Numbers might be seen flocking to the lower end of the church and forming a little congregation round the "Scripture-reader." Many persons far advanced in life actually learned to read for the purpose of searching the Oracles of God. Such was the general excitement that at last the tavern and the ale-house often became the scene of religious discussion. The king found it necessary to discourage, by a proclamation, these public debates.

The "Index of Prohibited Books" of 1529 gives the names of more than 20 books by Luther which had been diligently circulated by young scholars of Cambridge and Oxford universities. One of them was: "Luther's Catechism in Latin, by J. Lonicerus," that is, the Large Catechism. Another was: "Enchiridion of the Godly Prayers," — a translation of one of Luther's books containnig the Small Catechism in Latin. So it is proved that Luther's Small and Large Catechisms had been imported into England already in the first year of their publication.

We have not here the space to tell about the political entanglements which soon after Luther's death gave the Calvinistic Reformation the upper hand in England. But before the religion of

the country became Reformed, Lutheranism had given the English-speaking world an imperishable legacy — the English Bible, translated by Wm. Tyndale. And before the Lutheran influence had waned, the highest churchman in the English realm, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, had given to his people a translation of Luther's Catechism. In 1548 its words were familiar to a large number of English readers, though Luther's name was buried under Cranmer's and the actual text lost its identity, as it was absorbed into the far larger catechism that passed as the work of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Thomas Cranmer was sent to Germany in 1532 on a political mission by the British king, Henry VIII. In the course of this mission Cranmer spent some time in Nuernberg and, while there, married Osiander's niece Margaret (not Anne, as the name is frequently given). From this time onward Cranmer kept in touch with the Reformers on the continent through an extensive correspondence. In 1548 he published his book of instruction for the common people, entitled: "Catechismus; That is to say a shorte Introduction into Christian Religion for the synguler commoditie and profyte of childre end yong people. Set forth by the moste reverende father in God Thomas Archbyshop of Canterbury, Primate of

all England and Metropolitane. Gualterus Lynne excudebat, 1548."

The origin of this book, of which only a few copies are in existence to-day, is very curious. In 1539 Justus Jonas translated Osiander's *Kinderpredigten* into Latin and thus became at the same time a translator of Luther's Small Catechism, because this is incorporated in these sermons. Cranmer's Catechism is nothing else than a translation of this book. The Archbishop became acquainted with these *Kinderpredigten* when he visited Nuernberg, and quite probably he was urged by Osiander to translate them for use in the Church of England. In this strange manner, Luther's Small Catechism for a time became the official Catechism of the Anglican Church.

There is some doubt whether Cranmer himself actually did the work of translating or whether he had it largely done by others, though "oversene and corrected" by himself. At all events it bears the impress of the splendid English style of which Cranmer was a master, and the additions made to the original certainly suggest his hand. Chief among these is a dissertation of 14 pages on idolatry and images, appended to the sermon on the First Commandment and a shorter passage added to the part preceding the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer.

In his book on the Lutheran Movement in En-

gland Dr. H. E. Jacobs, of Philadelphia, presents extracts from Cranmer's translation. The entire text has more recently been published with an introductory essay by Rev. John C. Mattes.

From the samples hereafter to be submitted it is clear that Cranmer did not intend to give a literal translation, and it is to be borne in mind that he was rendering into English a Latin translation and not Luther's original German. But while much of it is in the form of paraphrase, the translation, on the whole, is a faithful reproduction of the thought of the original. It has been pointed out by Rev. Mattes that the tendency towards Calvinism that carried Cranmer completely away in his latter days unconsciously shows itself in certain changes, especially in the inclusion of the long section concerning images after the First Commandment.

A few extracts are here appended in order to give the reader an idea of Cranmer's translation:

THE FYRST COMMAUNDEMENT

Thou shalt haue none other goddes but me.

And when this question shal be demaunded of you, how do you vndrestand the first commaundement? then shal ye answer thus.

In this precept we be commaunded to feare and loue God with al oure harte, and to put our whole trust and confidence in him.

The Eyghte Commaundemente

Thou shalt beare no false wytnesse agaynste thy neyghbour.

Wherefore good children when you shal be demaunded, how vnderstande you the eyghte commaundement, you shall answere:

We ought to feare and loue oure Lorde God aboue all thynge, and for his sake to abstyne from all liynge, backe bytyng, slaunderyng and yll reportynge, by the whiche oure neyghbours good name fame and credit may be impeched or decayed, and rather to excuse hydde [hide] or gentely to enterprete another mannes faute [fault], then malicyously to make the wourste of the same, and wyth the loude trumpe of our tongue to blaste it abrode, to the knowledge of all the towne or place wherein we dwel.

Explanation of the Second Article.

I beleue that Jesus Christ, veray God, begotten of God the Father, and verye manne, borne of the Virgin Marie, is my Lorde whiche by hys precyouse bloode and holy passyon, hathe redemed me, a myserable and damned wretch from all my synnes, frome death eternall, and from the tyrannie of the Deuell, that I should be his owne true subject, and lyue within his kyngdome, and serue hym, in a newe and euerlastynge lyfe and iustice, euen as oure Lorde Christe, after he rose from deathe to lyfe, lyueth and raygneth euerlastyngly.

Explanation of the Fourth Petition.

by dayly breade is vnderstande all thinges necessarie for oure lyuynge, as meate, drynke, clothe, house, lande, cattell, monye, householde stuffe, a good wyfe, obediente children, wealth, commen peace and tranquilities, seasenable wether, holsome ayer [air], health of body, constant frendes, honest neighbours, and suche lyke thynges, whereby we maye leade in thys worlde a godly and quiet lyfe.

From the Instruction on Baptism.

Thirdly, yf a man aske you, how can water bryng to passe so great thynges? ye shall aunswer.

Uerely the water worketh not these thynges, but the worde of God, whiche is ioyned to the water, and fayth whiche doth beleue the worde of God. For without the worde of God, water is water, and not baptisme, but when the word of the lyuvung God is ioyned to the water, then it is baptisme, and water of wonderful holsomnes, and the bath of regeneration through the Holy Ghost, as saincte Paule writeth. God saued vs by the bath of regeneration, and renewying of the Holy Ghost, whom he powred vpon vs plenteously, by Jesus Christ our Sauiour, that we beyng made rightuous by his grace, maye be heyres of euerlastying lyfe.

While unsuitable for our present age on ac-

count of its obsolete language, the present writer for one holds that the Catechism has never been done more beautifully into English than by Archbishop Cranmer. The phrases have a melodious quality, a gentle cadence, which gives this translation an appeal later translators have never been able to recapture.

A few words regarding the closing years of Cranmer's life are in place. He had been made archbishop by Henry VIII when the latter revolted against the Pope. After the death of Henry in 1547, a boy of nine years, Edward VI, succeeded to the throne, but reigned only until 1553. Now a daughter of Henry VIII, a bigoted Romanist, Bloody Mary, ascended the throne, and a time of persecution for Protestants commenced. Cranmer was accused of blasphemy because he had written against the Catholic religion, of perjury because he had broken his oath to the Pope, of immorality because he had married. He was then excommunicated and kept in prison. Weakened by his trial and imprisonment, Cramner, now 67 years of age, was finally prevailed upon to retract and deny his Protestant faith. As soon as he had signed this document, he was sentenced to death by fire. His enemies waited for him to repeat before the assembled multitude his disavowal of the Protestant doctrine. To the amazement of all he, instead, made retraction of his denial and implored God's

mercy for what he had done in the hour of weakness. As the flames were applied to the fagots, he stretched his right hand, with which he had signed the denial of his faith, into the blazing fire, and as it was consumed, he explained: "This hand has sinned! Oh, unworthy hand!" His last words were those of Stephen: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" (March 21, 1556.)

A few words, now, regarding the English translations of the Catechism which have appeared in America.

When the Dutch, the Swedes, and the Germans came to America, they brought with them various explanations or expositions of Luther's Small Catechism from their home countries. The Dutch had a very bulky volume, printed in Amsterdam, with more than four hundred questions and answers. The government of Sweden sent many hundreds of copies to supply the Swedish settlements on the Delaware. Among the German settlers Muehlenberg, in 1747, found more than fifty different catechism and hymn-books. Count Zinzendorf caused the Small Catechism to be printed at Germantown, Pa., in 1744. But the questions and answers supplied by Zinzendorf so strongly reflected his own peculiar views that it could hardly be used by Lutherans. Large explanations, containing also the familiar *Kinder-Examen* (Wuer-

temberg) and *Golden A B C*, were printed by the old Pennsylvania Ministerium.

The first English catechism was printed in 1749 at Philadelphia, very probably in the publishing house of Benjamin Franklin, in whose office a German reprint appeared in the same year. The translator of this first American catechism was Peter Brunnholtz, a Lutheran pastor, and he was assisted by Peter Koch, a prominent Swedish Lutheran. No copy of this catechism has been preserved. From this time onward many translations of the Catechism by American Lutherans are on record. The oldest, of which a copy is still in existence, is one issued 1794 by Dr. J. C. Kunze, the actual work of translating having been done by his assistant pastor, the Rev. Strebeck. Very widely used was the translation of Dr. P. F. Mayer (1816). Paul Henkel's translation left the press in 1811 and was very generally used in Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. But Mayer's translation superseded all others and was also the foundation for the translation of David Henkel, which for almost fifty years (until 1867) was the official text of the Tennessee Synod.

The Ohio Synod and the Missouri Synod in 1884 brought out another translation, and since that time various American Lutheran bodies have independently brought out translations into English which all endeavor, with more or less suc-

cess, to render the strong, yet tender and melodious original of Dr. Martin Luther.

The strangest catechism of all is one which out of a thousand Americans or Englishmen not one can read, the English Catechism for the blind, printed in Braille, the raised type which the blind read with their finger-tips. This catechism, with a few explanatory additions by Dr. W. Dallmann, was published by the Missouri Synod in 1927.

American Lutherans have reason to study the history of the use of Luther's Catechism in the English Lutheran churches of America. Some hundred years ago, the Lutheran Church in America became affected by the rationalism and the emotionalism that abounded in the American Reformed Churches. Professor Gerberding describes this period in his book *The Lutheran Catechist:* —

"Luther's Catechism fell into disfavor and disuse. Substitutes were offered in its place. So-called explanations, which explained away Luther's sense, were circulated. Such a substitute for Luther's was *Quitman's Catechism*, published 'with consent and approbation' of the New York Ministerium in 1814. It was rationalistic throughout and removed the very foundations as well as the essence of the faith of the Church of the Reformation. In circles where there was spirituality enough to be repelled by such subtle and soul-

destroying form of unbelief, emotionalism, under the form of so-called 'New Measurism,' or Revivalism, took the place of catechization. Indifference to doctrine fostered indifference, if not hostility, to catechization. In many places in the Lutheran churches, especially those liberal English Lutheran churches that wanted to be like the other churches around them, it went entirely out of fashion. It was no rare thing to find people who had grown up in an English Lutheran church who had not seen a copy of Luther's Catechism. The results, as may be imagined, were disastrous. When people know of no difference between the Lutheran Church and others, why should they love or sacrifice for her? If one is as good as another, it is foolish, it is wasteful, if not sinful, to build up Lutheran missions where there are other churches.

"It took some liberal Lutherans a long time to learn these self-evident truths. Some, indeed, have not learned them to this day. This diminishing class is careless as to thorough catechizing. They do not build up strong Lutheran churches. If all would accept their principles and follow their methods, the Lutheran Church would have no future. And she would deserve none."

CHAPTER XI.

The Red Man Begins to Read.

astor John Campanius came to America with Captain Johann Printz in 1643 to minister to the spiritual wants of the early Swedish Lutheran settlers on the Delaware River.

But it was as the first Protestant missionary to the American Indians that Pastor Campanius has won deathless fame in the annals of American history. This honor was formerly accorded John Eliot, the Englishman, but L. P. Powell, in his *History of Education in Delaware,* asks, "Should not John Campanius, rather than John Eliot, be called in Bancroft's words, 'the morning star of missionary enterprises'?" Eliot did not begin his work among the Massachusetts Indians until 1646, while Campanius, as noted, arrived in 1643.

Thomas Campanius, a grandson of the noted missionary, has given us in his *History of New Sweden* a very interesting account of the impression made on the Delaware Indians when they first heard his grandfather conduct services for the colonists. He says: —

"They greatly wondered that he had so much to say and that he stood alone and talked so long,

while all the rest were listening in silence. This excited in them strange suspicions; they thought everything was not right, and that some conspiracy was going forward among us, in consequence of which my grandfather's life and that of the other ministers were for some time in considerable danger from the Indians."

When the Indians learned to know him better, however, they began to love Campanius and begged him to learn their language, in order to be able to teach them Christianity. This he did and then set about to translate Luther's Catechism into the Delaware tongue.

"He succeeded so well," writes the historian, "that many of the barbarians were converted to the Christian faith, or at least acquired so much knowledge of it that they were ready to exclaim, as Captain John Smith relates of the Virginian Indians, that as far as the cannons and guns of the Christians exceeded the bows and arrows of the Indians in shooting, so far was their God superior to that of the Indians."

Thus Luther's Catechism was the first book to be translated into the tongue of the American Indian.

The Campanius Catechism was printed and published at the personal expense of King Charles XI of Sweden, and five hundred copies were sent to America in 1696. This Catechism

Title-Page of Campanius's Catechism in the Delaware Indian Language.
Edition of 1696.

gives the Swedish and Indian texts in alternating paragraphs. A copy of this historic book is preserved in the library of Augustana College, Rock Island, Ill.

Dr. F. Forsander, the veteran historian of the Augustana Synod, has given an interesting account of the work of Campanius. He says: "At present it is not known how many Indians were baptized by Campanius or how many continued steadfastly in the faith of Jesus Christ, but God knows it and will reveal it in the light of eternity. The faithful instruction by Campanius in evangelical Christianity, together with the pious life of the Swedes, impressed itself upon the savages. Thus they used to call the Swedish colonists their brethren; and when some of the Swedes had been killed by roaming Indians in the spring of 1644, their sachems came spontaneously to Governor Printz and offered him satisfaction for regaining friendship and confidence."

The health of Campanius became undermined by hard work and much traveling, and in May, 1648, he found it necessary to return to Sweden. He died September 17, 1683, as pastor of Freshult parish of Uppsala diocese.

CHAPTER XII.

Luther on the Catechism.

"As for myself, let me say this: I am also a doctor and a preacher. I am as learned and experienced as all those who in their arrogance and security presume that they do not need the Catechism. Nevertheless, I consider myself but a child that is being taught the Catechism, read and recite to myself every morning, or whenever I have time, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, psalms, etc. Every day I must continue to read and study, and yet cannot claim to have graduated, but must remain a child and a pupil of the Catechism, — and gladly remain it."

These are the familiar words of Luther found in his introduction to the Large Catechism.

In a sermon delivered April 18, 1530, he expressed himself in similar terms: —

"Whosoever is able to read should study every morning a psalm or some other chapters of Scripture. This is my own custom, and then I pray with the children the Ten Commandments, the Creed,

the Lord's Prayer, and some psalm. This I do in order to retain what I have learned and not permit the mildew of pride to settle upon my Christian understanding."

Again, in a sermon delivered November 27 of the same year: —

"Beware lest you become presumptuous and arrogant, as if you knew the Catechism which you have heard so often. In this branch of knowledge we must ever regard ourselves as learners. It is inexhaustible, because it is essentially not speech, but life. I, *Dr. Martinus,* a teacher and clergyman, every day feel the necessity of praying the Ten Commandments and the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, as children are accustomed to do. Be not ashamed to do likewise. You will experience excellent results."

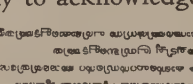
Elsewhere he says: —

"This Catechism is truly a Bible of the laity, wherein is contained the entire doctrine necessary to be known by every Christian for salvation."

And in his *Table Talk:* —

"The Catechism must remain, must continue to govern within the Christian Church and be the Master. I mean the Ten Commandments of God, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments. Many have attacked it; but it will remain and will continue to have the supremacy through Him of whom it is written: 'Thou art a Priest forever!' "

Addressing Wolfgang Capito in a letter dated June 9, 1537, Luther accounts the Catechism as one of his best books. "I am quite unconcerned about the fate of my books. Sometimes I am so disgusted with them that I am willing to see them perish. But I am ready to acknowledge a few as truly my

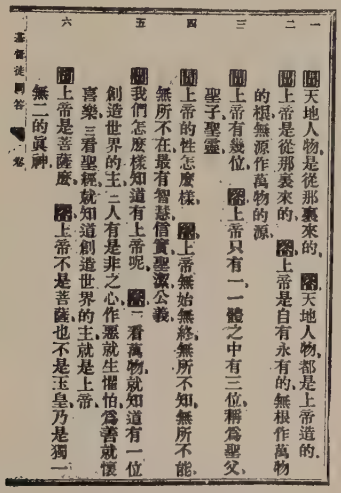


Catechism in Malayalam.
Trivandrum, India, 1923.

own, namely, the book on the Freedom of the Will and the Catechism."

The humility of the Reformer is evident as he addresses his dear friend Jonas in these terms: "I am again a freshman in the Ten Commandments. I am again a boy, learning them by rote, and I again perceive that there is no measure to

their wisdom and begin to esteem the Decalog as the art of understanding the Gospel, even as the Gospel is the art of setting forth the Decalog. Thus it appears to me as truly infinite, yet as a complete and universal guide-book."



Page from Chinese Catechism.

This chapter would be incomplete without the translation of part of a sermon delivered by Luther at Kemberg immediately after the two Catechisms left the press: —

"The Catechism is now being preached to you. Know, then, that whoever has not received this instruction, cannot be called a Christian and shall

not be admitted to the Sacraments nor serve as sponsor. It is now being so clearly set forth, both at home and in the church, that you cannot help but learn it. As it is absurd that any workman should neglect the science of his craft, so it is absurd for a Christian to remain ignorant of Christian doctrine. Do not permit the love of money to keep yourselves or your children from this instruction, which has the promise of such heavenly gain. But give particular care that your children are brought under instruction. We old fellows — trees that have withered under the rule of the Pope — cannot produce much fruit; we do our best work with the young sprouts. God will reward those who duly instruct their children and will not fail of His judgments regarding those who neglect this duty. And you young people, beware of neglecting your opportunity now that you have the Catechism, Large and Small, and also parents who are giving their attention to your studies. You parents, on the other hand, must all the more be diligent in order that, teaching others, you may be taught yourselves."

CHAPTER XIII.

What Luther's Contemporaries Thought of the Catechism.

You will not be surprised to hear that as early as the year 1700 a theologian had gathered no less than a hundred Explanations of Luther's Small Catechism. Scores of others have since appeared.

Numberless attempts have been made to write new handbooks of Christian instruction embodying the main thoughts of Luther's Catechism, some of them rationalistic perversions of Christian truth which Luther would have indignantly repudiated. None of these books have ever even become a serious rival of Luther's masterpiece.

When Luther appealed in the year 1527 for a system of instruction of the youth in Christian doctrine and morality, there was an immediate response. Some of the treatises and booklets designed to fill this need were the work of outstanding men, such as Melanchthon, Bugenhagen, John Agricola, Link, Brenz, etc. The text written

by Andrew Althamer of Brandenburg first bore the name "Catechism." There were a dozen others. Whether Luther knew any of these writings, we are unable to say. Regarding some, however, it is very plain that they were the direct outflow of some of Luther's early tracts on Christian instruction, sometimes reproducing entire sentences from his *Short Form* and *Little Book of Prayer*.

The supreme worth of Luther's Catechism, to which these facts testify, is echoed in the opinion of Luther's friend and coworker Justus Jonas: —

"The Catechism is only a small book, which may be purchased for six pennies, but which six thousand worlds do not outweigh in value. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit has indited it to our sainted Luther."

Similarly Mathesius: "If Dr. Luther in his career had accomplished no more than the restoration of the Catechism to the home, school, and pulpit, all the world could not sufficiently thank or repay him for it."

In his famous critical edition of the Small Catechism Dr. Th. Harnack quotes Andreas Fabricius to this effect: "Yonder sun has not seen, next to the Holy Scriptures, a better book than the Catechism of Luther. It is the very blood and marrow, the purpose and sum of the Bible, the source and end of Christian testimony. Its words are things;

முதலாம் பங்கு

கிறிஸ்தவ சபையிலே
தொன்றுதொட்டு வழங்கிவருகிற மூலக்குறிப்பிடமும்,
ஞான திரவியங்களைக் கற்பிக்கும் மூலவாக்கியங்களுமாகிய
கிறிஸ்துமார்க்கத்தின் ஆதி நியாயங்கள்.

கர்த்தர் அருளிச்செய்த பத்துக் கற்பனைகள்.

முதலாங் கற்பனையாவது, உன் தேவனுகிய கர்த்தர் நாமே. நமக்கு முன்பாக உனக்கு வேறே தேவனில்லாமல் போவதாக. உயர வானத்திலேயுங் கீழே பூமியிலேயும் பூமியின் கீழ்த் தண்ணீரிலேயும் உண்டான வஸ்துக்களுக்கு ஒத்திருக்கிற சுரூபத்தையாதலும், விக்கிரகத்தையென்கிலும் நீ உனக்கு உண்டாக்க வேண்டாம்; நீ அவைகளை நமஸ்கரிக்கவும் வணங்கவும்வேண்டாம.

இரண்டாங் கற்பனையாவது, உன் தேவனுகிய கர்த்தருடைய நாமத்தை வீணிலே வழங்காதிருப்பாயாக.

மூன்றுங் கற்பனையாவது, திருநாளை ஆசரிக்க நினைப்பாயாக.

நாலாங் கற்பனையாவது, உனக்கு கன்மைவருகிறதற்கும், நீ பூமியிலே நீடித்திருக்கிறதற்கும், உன் தகப்பனையும் உன் தாயையுஞ் சங்கித்திருப்பாயாக.

ஐந்தாங் கற்பனையாவது, கொலை செய்யாதிருப்பாயாக.

ஆறுங் கற்பனையாவது, விபசாரம் பண்ணாதிருப்பாயாக.

First Page of Catechism.

Translated into Tamil and Printed at Nagercoil, India, 1925.

it has as many practical uses as it has chapters; it is alike incomparable for the brevity of its pages and for the amplitude of its doctrine."

At the close of the Reformation Age Martin Chemnitz, called the Second Martin, on account of his crystal-clear presentation of Lutheran doctrine, published his summary of Christian theology. In his introduction to this famous work, Polycarp Leyser said: —

"The sainted Luther never applied greater care to any work than to this brief summary of all those extended works which make up the body of his writings. In his Small Catechism, more precious than gold and gems, we find the ecclesiastical doctrine in prophetic and apostolic purity. The whole of Christian doctrine is there so concentrated and so clearly set forth that it may not improperly be called a standard of the Church, being throughout taken from the sacred Scriptures. It can truthfully be said that in this tiny book such a wealth of truth is contained that if all faithful preachers of the Gospel treated nothing else in their sermons throughout their days, if only they explained to their people the mystery of divine wisdom comprehended in these few words and set forth the Scriptural evidence on which they are based, they could never exhaust its immensities."

CHAPTER XIV.

Modern Estimates.

We are celebrating the four-hundredth anniversary of the Small and Large Catechisms. The world has progressed in many ways since 1529, also in methods of instruction. Is it not a notable fact that of all handbooks of instruction, whether secular or religious, the Small Catechism of Martin Luther is the only text in use to-day? Not a single handbook of science or history written four hundred, or even a hundred, years ago is to-day used in the schools. Not a single religious book of instruction has survived. Luther's Catechism to-day, it can safely be said, is the text-book supreme of religious doctrine. It is the acknowledged pearl of childhood instruction, its merits being recognized not only by Lutherans, but by men of all denominations. We may suitably conclude our little memorial volume by recording some of the opinions expressed by critics whose word commands universal attention.

With deep spiritual comprehension Wilhelm Loehe said: "The Small Catechism of Luther can throughout be read and spoken with a prayerful heart, indeed, can be *prayed*. This can be said of no other catechism. It contains the most definitely asserted doctrine, which resists all perversion, and yet is not polemical; it is pervaded by the most serene air of peace. The most manly, personally acquired conviction has found utterance in it; and yet the mind can dwell upon it in blissful meditation."

This is the opinion of Leopold Ranke, one of the greatest of modern historians, writing in 1839: "The Catechism of 1529, concerning which Luther himself said that he 'prayed' it, no matter how long he had been a theological doctor, is as child-like as it is profound, as clear as it is unsearchable, as simple as it is sublime. Happy the man who sticks to it and nourishes his soul upon it! He has in every moment a fountain of unfailing comfort. He possesses, under a thin shell, the very kernel of truth, sufficient unto the wisest of the wise!"

Dr. Albrecht says in the great Weimar edition of Luther's Works: "Characteristic of Luther's Catechism is the conservative adaptation to the historical forms of Christianity, pervaded by a new comprehension of the Gospel. With a witnessing power of religious experience Luther has presented a most profound statement of essential Christianity,

פאָטער אונזער, דער דוא ביזט אים הימעל.

וואָס מיינט דאָס? ענטפער:

גאָט וויל אונז דערמיט דערמונטערן, אז מיר זאלען גלייבען, אז ער איז אונזער רעכטער פאָטער, און מיר זיינען זיינע רעכטע קינדער, כדי מיר זאלען זיין דרייסט און איהם ביטען מיט דעם גאַנצען צוטרויען, וויא דיא ליעבע קינדער זייער ליעבען פאָטער.

Padre nuestro que estás en los cielos

¿Qué quiere decir esto?

Dios, por estas palabras, quiere atraernos cariñosamente, para que creamos que El es nuestro verdadero Padre y nosotros sus verdaderos hijos, para que con confianza y con toda seguridad le roguemos como los hijos amados a su padre amado.

Pae nosso, que estás nos céus.

Que quer dizer isso ?

Deus, por estas palavras, quer attrahir-nos carinhosamente para crermos que Elle é o nosso verdadeiro Pae e nós os Seus verdadeiros filhos, para que lhe peçamos sem temor e com toda a confiança, assim como os filhos amados pedem ao seu pae amado.

Padre nostro, che sei nei Cieli.
Qual'è il significato di queste parole?
Iddio invita noi amorevolmente in questa introduzione a credere ch'Egli è il vero nostro Padre, che noi siamo suoi sinceri figli, acciocchè pieni di fede ricorriamo a lui come figli ubbidienti all'amato Padre.

The Introduction to the Lord's Prayer in Yiddish, Spanish, Portugese, and Italian.

adapted to the most childlike comprehension, and united with the expression of a personal Christian piety."

Dr. Charles Porterfield Krauth, one of the most profound theologians the American Lutheran Church has produced, has often been quoted: —

"The Catechism is a thread through the labyrinth of divine wonders. Persons often get confused, but if they will hold on to this Catechism, it will lead them through without being lost. It is often called the 'Little Bible,' and the 'Bible of the Laity,' because it presents the plain and simple doctrines of the Holy Book in its own words. Pearls strung are easily carried, unstrung they are easily lost. The Catechism is a string of Bible pearls. The order of arrangement is the historical, the Law, Faith, Prayer, Sacrament of Baptism, and all crowned with the Lord's Supper — just as God worked them out and fixed them in history."

In his great work *The Creeds of Christendom* the Reformed theologian Dr. Philip Schaff gives this whole-hearted appreciation of the merits of the Small Catechism: —

"It is truly a great little book, with as many thoughts as words, and every word telling and sticking to the heart as well as the memory. It bears the stamp of the religious genius of Luther, who was both its father and pupil. It exhibits his

almost apostolic gift of expressing the deepest things in the plainest language for the common people. It is strong food for a man, and yet as simple as a child. It marks an epoch in the history of religious instruction; it purged it from popish superstitions and brought it back to Scriptural purity and simplicity. As it left far behind all former catechetical manuals, it has, in its own order of excellence and usefulness, never been surpassed. To the age of the Reformation it was an incalculable blessing. Luther himself wrote no better book, excepting, of course, his translation of the Bible, and it alone would have immortalized him as one of the great benefactors of the human race. Few books have elicited such enthusiastic praise, and have, even to this day, such grateful admirers."

In his volume on the Reformation, part of a larger work entitled *Ten Epochs of Church History,* Prof. Williston Walker (Congregationalist) says: —

"The most notable spiritual monuments of this effort to reconstruct the shattered Church on evangelical lines are to be seen in the two noble Catechisms which Luther prepared in 1529. The Smaller Catechism in particular, expounding to the simplest comprehension the Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Baptism, and the Supper, is one of the masterpieces of Christian instruction."

Bishop J. L. Nuelsen (Methodist Episcopal), author of *Luther the Leader,* voices the following appraisal, worthy of being remembered by all who have at heart the indoctrination of American youth in the teachings of Christianity: —

"A good many objections may be raised against catechetical instruction. It is 'dry, barren, does not promote spiritual life, substitutes dogma for the study of the Bible at first hand.' Admitting the truth of all this, yet we may truly say that Luther's conception systematically and constantly to train children in the truth of religion is right. The methods may change in accordance with the improved methods of child-training, the principle remains. Catechetical instruction without spiritual life may develop dead formalism; but it is equally true that dramatic conversions without Christian nurture generate an unsteady, emotional type of Christian life, which fails to develop into a full-orbed Christian character. Sound and thorough instruction combined with personal consecration to God forms the foundation of a consistent Christian character. Both are needed.

"Present indications are that the American churches are waking up to the fact that it is poor policy to rely too much on spasmodic, emotional revivals to bring the young people to an experimental knowledge of Christ; they will in the

future pay more attention to systematic instruction, not in dead dogmas, but in vital verities. And present indications point also to the fact that the American people will realize more than heretofore that purely secular education may produce strong and well-trained intellects, but that the highest interests of our nation demand men of sterling character, of pure honesty, of unmitigated unselfishness. Education in religion and morals blended with intellectual training can alone produce such men.

"This is the way which was pointed out by Luther. The sooner we decide to follow him, the better it will be for the American people."

Professor McGiffert of Union Theological Seminary, in his *Life of Luther,* says: —

"In 1529 appeared his [Luther's] Large and Small Catechisms, the latter containing a most beautiful summary of Christian faith and duty, wholly devoid of polemics of every kind and so simple and concise as to be easily understood and memorized by every child. It has formed the basis of the religious education of German youth ever since. Though preceded by other catechisms from the pen of this and that colleague or disciple, it speedily displaced them all, not simply because of its authorship, but because of its superlative merit, and has alone maintained itself in general use.

The versatility of the Reformer in adapting himself with such success to the needs of the young and immature is no less than extraordinary. Such a little book as this reveals most clearly the genius of the man."

We conclude our book with a translation of the closing paragraphs of Theo. Harnack's Introduction to his epoch-making work on the text of Luther's Small Catechism (1855): —

"Let me reiterate the words of Luther quoted in the beginning of this Introduction: 'The Catechism must remain, and must continue to govern within the Christian Church.' As long as it retains this position, the Church may rest secure. From the beginning they have often maltreated this book; the plowshares have drawn long furrows upon its back; but they have been unable to break its influence. It is like a tree planted at the water brooks, 'though the heat come, it remaineth unafraid, and its leaves remain green; nor doth it lose heart in days of drought, but bringeth fruit without end.' It has an inexhaustible, never-aging life within itself, and by virtue of it has not only survived the competition with enemies and rivals in the past, but will also outlast the hodge-podges and catechetical abortions of more recent times. For, as the pious Sabine of Brandenburg said: 'Luther remains Luther, and none will prove his superior.'

"Our gracious Lord preserve in church, school, and home that newly awakened love, tested in fire, for our Small Catechism! May He continue to bless this book for the conversion of the hearts of the children to their fathers and of the fathers to their children, in order that the most distant generation may hear the proclamation that this God is our God forevermore. 'He leadeth us like the youth!' "

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